

AFRICAN ADVENTURES

by the same author

KILLERS IN AFRICA

African Adventures

BY

ALEXANDER LAKE



W. H. ALLEN

LONDON

1914

Printed in Great Britain by
Hunt, Barnard & Co. Ltd., Aylesbury
for the publishers, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd., Essex Street,
London, W.C.2

CONTENTS

- 1 Apes' Lost Week-end *page 9*
- 2 A Lion for Mussolini *page 23*
- 3 The King's Emeralds *page 40*
- 4 A Witch-Doctor's Magic *page 67*
- 5 A 10,000 Dollar Bet *page 91*
- 6 Killing Without Guns *page 113*
- 7 How to Cook a Crocodile
(and other big-game recipes) *page 131*
- The Man Who Feared Spiders *page 150*
- 9 Murder in the Congo *page 170*
- 10 Nightmares in the Jungle *page 196*
- 11 Witch-Doctor "Magic" *page 213*
- 12 Of Birds, Men and Cats *page 230*
- 13 The Jungle can be Fun *page 257*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

To avoid embarrassment, I have deliberately altered the names of some of the persons and places mentioned in this book.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Carter at his 3-D camera: Nod and Wynkum <i>facing page</i>	16
The author: the Carters and a pygmy baby	17
Month-old rhino: the elephant attacked by Ubusuku	32
Jumping Watutsis: on the camera boom over boiling rapids	33
Charging rhino: cutting zebra steaks	64
Barabbaig bride says farewell to her husband	65
Lions, one of which chased Carter up a tree	80
Peg Carter and a group of lions	81
Wildebeest hung as lion bait	144
Topoki dancer, the "black Marilyn Monroe"	145
Furiously angry lion faces camera	160
Hector Acebas takes a bath	161
Male lion and buffalo carcass: sneaking up on a lion	240
Masai with spear	241
Safari line: forty-five inch buffalo horns	256
The Carters and near-record horned buffalo	257

For
MILDRED
my wife

I

APES' LOST WEEK-END

THREE IS MORE ADVENTURE, and far more money, in professional African hunting today than there has ever been.

Within one week after landing in any African port, a man with initiative can be making a living shooting crocodiles; collecting rare small animals for museums; selling hides and skins to American fur traders; trapping male monkeys for European monkey-gland doctors; shooting meat for mines and road contractors; or working at any of many such jobs.

Unless the man's a smart trader, he won't grow rich, but he'll make a living. He'll work hard, for he'll foot-slog an average of twenty-five miles for each successful shot from his rifle.

Men deficient in imagination are unable to recognize an adventure when they see it. I know a farmer in Kenya who was pestered by lions for thirteen years. He considered them vermin; saw nothing interesting in them. Yet, Martin and Osa Johnson, American camera-hunters, wrote fascinating books about those same lions.

I know a man who for twenty years has made his living by shooting crocodiles on Congo and Uganda rivers. To him, a crocodile is merely a stinking reptile. He doesn't even know to what uses the cured skins are put. Yet, my stories about hunting crocs along those very rivers have been published for years in magazines of Europe and America.

An adventure is a happening that involves hazard or danger.

African Adventures

The threat is usually to one's life or well-being; but sometimes to one's ego. A deflated ego can be painful . . . and monkeys are Africa's best ego deflators.

— Around 1912, demand for male monkey sex glands for transplanting into wealthy, old roués of Europe and America became so great that the price of a live, male monkey jumped from one and sixpence to almost four pounds. Today gland-transplanting is even bigger business, and although he-goats and rams now share the monkey's burden of supplying oomph prices paid for young, healthy male monkeys are still satisfactory.

Orders for male monkeys are usually for lots of fifty—about £180. Using ordinary methods, a man is fortunate if he captures fifty males in a month. But, monkey-trapping can be speeded.

I was nineteen, and for two years had been apprentice meat hunter for Nicobar Jones, one of Africa's great traders. We'd just returned to Pretoria from a five-month hunt in the Congo. I'd bagged my first elephant and my first lion on that trip. I really felt like a *hunter*.

One morning Jones called me into the warehouse and handed me a letter from a monkey buyer. It was an order for sixty live male vervet monkeys, called "grey apes" by hunters. As I handed the letter back, Jones said:

"Take two ox wagons and three Kaffirs. Trek up to the abandoned farm of mine near Zecrust and fill this order."

With my head still full of elephants, the idea of catching 20-pound grey-green vervets was a let-down. I said:

"Apes, for Pete's sake! Why not baboons—they've got brains."

"No baboons," Jones said. "Seems some doctors transplanted baboon glands in a New York playboy one time. He married seven women, one after the other. Each woman divorced him

Apes' Lost Week-end

'cause when he wasn't swinging from chandeliers, he was searching for fleas. It'll be good for you to take a try at monkeys. You've been throwing your weight about lately!

"Monkeys . . ."

"There's over £200 in this job, son," Jones interrupted, "expenses'll be about £4 a day. If it takes you more than fifty days to catch sixty apes, I'll lose money."

"I'll be back in a week," I said.

"Could be, but I doubt it."

"With any luck at all . . ."

"Ain't no luck—you know that. Good luck's know-how. Bad luck's ignorance."

"Well, anybody," I said, "could catch sixty apes."

"Sure, if you get 'em drunk," Jones said.

"Very funny," I said huffily.

Jones looked at me quizzically, began to speak, shrugged instead, and turned away. I'd a feeling, somehow, that he was laughing at me. It got my dander up.

The rest of that day and part of the night I tried to figure out a way to catch sixty apes in one swoop, so to speak. After midnight an idea struck, and I chuckled.

Early next morning I bought a two-gallon can of ready-mixed cabinet-maker's glue and a package of chloride of lime. When mixed, they'd make a very sticky bird-lime. I'd show Jones, the old goat! I'd be back with sixty live monkeys in no time.

We left Pretoria in mid-morning—Masilo, an old Zulu tracker, Jan and Jappie, Basuto boys, and I. We drove the oxen hard and made the journey to Jones's old farm in three days. I put the Basutos to work weaving bamboo cages to fit in the wagon beds, and Masilo and I prowled about looking over the ape situation.

The old orchard was a brush-grown jungle, but it wasn't full

African Adventures

of apes. We decided there was only one troop. Masilo, who could read sign as readily as I could read a book, said:

“Maybe seventy-five papas, *Baas*.”

That meant the troop numbered around three hundred; half youngsters, a quarter females, seventy-five papas—and I needed sixty of those papas.

From stores that Jan and Jappie had unloaded from the wagons, I got the glue and lime, and mixed them. The resulting mess was as rough and sticky a goo as I'd ever seen.

Next morning, with our hands, Masilo and I began spreading the mixture on the main branches of an orange tree. The mixture worked up our wrists and into my clothes. Not only was it sticky, but it stank. Masilo daubed a branch behind me and I promptly backed my head into it.

Hot, sweaty and frustrated, I crawled out of the tree and tried rubbing my hands with sand. I succeeded only in producing a sort of stucco. I tried washing in a small stream. Water relaxed the glue a bit and I finally got most of the mess off by using wet sand as a scouring powder. Meanwhile, Masilo, still working, was able to coat most of the lower tree limbs before the mixture ran out.

I figured that if we caught only one ape, its cries and struggles would bring the whole troop to see what was up. They in turn would find their feet glued to the tree. Then we'd release females and youngsters, put the males in the wagon cages and take off for Pretoria in triumph.

But for hours, apes played all around the “Judas” tree without once entering it. Then just before sundown, an adventurous baby got stuck like a fly in tanglefoot. His screeches brought comrades on the run and in no time twenty apes were fighting the tenacious paste, screaming hysterically.

However, only six of the twenty were adults and those six soon jerked loose, leaped to the ground and high-tailed it into

Apes' Lost Week-end

the brush, running clumsily as their bird-limed feet adhered to the grass and dirt.

The fourteen little ones still in the tree stopped shrieking, but shivered and chittered in fear. I felt sorry for them. I called, Jan and Jappie and the four of us carried baby monkeys to the stream where we scoured goo off every small black hand and foot and turned the youngsters loose. Then we cut down the tree and burned it.

Next morning I said to Masilo:

"Looks like we went at this job all wrong."

"Yebo. A cow does not eat grass with her hind end, O Baas. If you would catch apes you must be smarter than the ape."

I said: "You talk too much, Masilo. Show me how *you* catch monkeys."

Masilo's teeth flashed in a smile. He yelled something to Jan and Jappie. They smiled too, and loped off across the veldt. Masilo said:

"The ape that puts his hand in a hole and grasps a *mealie* is caught. The Basutos have gone to bring gourds from the *kopje*."

I knew, of course, that natives caught vervet and guenon monkeys by drilling a hole in a gourd—a hole large enough to admit an ape's open hand, but too small to permit a clenched fist to withdraw. The gourd was tied to a tree. Once a monkey grasped the corn inside, he was a goner. He'd die before he'd open his fist.

That method caught young and old, females as well as males—a slow process. However, my bird-lime idea had been a flop so the gourd trick seemed the only alternative.

Jan and Jappie turned up with six gourds about the size of small pumpkins and I sat watching as they cut holes and dropped in *mealie* kernels. It seemed to me that Jones wasn't going to make much profit on this deal.

The Kaffirs each took two gourds, put them on the ground

African Adventures

beneath trees, then fastened them to the trunks with rawhide thongs. Squatting like baboons, they then picked up the gourds, shook them, listened to the rattling, pretended to take kernels out. They performed this way until the apes, unable to restrain their curiosity, crowded close, peering from behind an overhead curtain of leaves.

After a while the Kaffirs retired to about fifty feet away and lay quietly in the grass. Soon an old female dropped from a branch, ran to a gourd and hopped up and down beside it. With one hand she made a couple of passes at it, shrieked and scampered up into the tree. In a minute or so she was down and at the gourd again. She slapped it, then jumped back. With scores of apes above staring in fascination, she then picked up the gourd, shook it, put her ear to the hole, listened, and hurriedly set the gourd down. She picked it up again, peered inside the hole, put the gourd on the ground, squatted on her haunches, pushed her hand through the hole, grasped the *mealies*, tried to withdraw her fist—then screamed murder!

She jerked, pulled, tugged, rolled on the ground, bit at the gourd and shook it frantically. She was still screeching when Masilo broke the gourd and let her loose.

Half an hour later, one of Jappie's gourds caught a male and Jappie carried the prize to the wagon cage. That one male was the only adult male trapped for three days although at least fifteen females were snared. On the next day we got four males. The next day, one. Ten days had now passed since we'd left Pretoria. With expenses running £4 a day, it meant those six male monkeys had already cost Jones nearly £7 each.

I felt pretty low.

That night I lay long in my blankets, staring at the stars. It wasn't fair to Jones to remain on so hopeless a job. I'd decided to inspan for Pretoria early next morning, when I recalled Jones's remark the night before we'd left:

Apes' Lost Week-end

"Get 'em drunk."

Suddenly I realized that he'd meant just that. It explained the odd look he'd given me, and his shrug.

I didn't know how to go about getting monkeys drunk, but I worked out a plan. I sent Masilo and Jappie to Zeerust next morning—a thirty-five-mile trek—with instructions to buy twenty-five pounds of sugar and four five-gallon paraffin tins. While they were gone Jan and I gathered a couple of bushels of ripe *moopels* (wild dates).

Masilo and Jappie got back towards evening three days later. Early next morning we cut the tops off the paraffin cans and half-filled each can with alternate layers of *moopels* and sugar. We filled the rest of each can with water, covered them with a tarp and left them in the sun.

I figured it'd take at least four days for the brew to develop a decent kick, but when Jan walked up to me three mornings later, burped, and fell on his face, I knew I was all set to contribute to the delinquency of monkeys.

I took the tarp off the cans and with the two sober Kaffirs retired behind the wagons leaving Jan to sleep off his jag in the grass. From time to time an ape would wander to the brew, sniff, wrinkle his nose and amble back to the trees. The sun slid lower and lower down the sky. The monkeys showed less and less interest in Demon Rum. I was disgusted. Then, at exactly the moment an old male started for the cans, Jan staggered up from the grass, stumbled to the nearest can, shoved his mouth into the brew and began gulping.

I grabbed my *sjambok* to give Jan a swipe, but stopped in my tracks when I noticed that the ape had sat down about twenty yards behind Jan and was watching him with comical intentness. Jan crawled back to his grass bed on hands and knees. When Jan lay down the ape went to the same can and without the slightest hesitation began to drink. He spat and sputtered a

African Adventures

few times, drank more, leaped to the edge of the can, teetered a moment, fell in. He climbed out, began to run, fell, got up, turned back to the can, jerked at it and tipped it over. He wobbled around a bit, squawking hoarsely, then swung a sudden punch at the air. He spun like a top, fell on his side and was instantly asleep.

By this time forty or fifty of the troop had edged up to watch. A young female made for another can, tasted, drank greedily, one hand on the can's edge. Her legs grew shaky and she sank slowly to the ground. She sat up, looked at one of her feet, tried to grasp it, failed, and sat chittering weakly.

Abruptly the sun sank behind the *kopje*. As if it were a signal, the whole ape mob wheeled and galloped for their Sleeping Place. An ape fears nothing more than the dark.

Next morning I rolled from my blankets early to keep Jan away from the liquor. I needn't have worried . . . he had a hangover that kept him moaning until noon.

The two captive apes proved to be better drinking men. They guzzled the water we offered, then leaped about happily on the bars of the cage. Masilo freed the female. The moment she was on the ground she made straight for the "saloon" and in ten minutes was silly-drunk—as were about thirty-five other apes.

The orgy started quietly, but soon became hectic. Monkeys stood toe-to-toe and slugged futilely at one another. One ran screaming for a tree, leaped at the trunk, missed by two feet and went rolling heels over head. Another rushed at Masilo, bit him on the ankle, then scrambled up the Zulu's body, put his arms round his neck, lay his head on his shoulder and smiled foolishly. A young female chased a staggering male, knocked him down, mounted him. The male screamed in outrage. Another female pulled the rapist off, took a swing at her,



These pictures by Arthur Aylcough illustrate the story of Nod and Wynkum (see chapter 9).

Top: Miki Carter, at his 3-D camera, watches as Peg kneels in front of angry Nod. Centre: Nod cocks an ear; Wynkum is in background. Bottom: Nod starts to charge; wounded Wynkum retreats.



*Above: The author,
holding a crocodile
rifle.*

*Right: The Carters and
friend in the Ituri
Forest. Miki is nursing
a pygmy baby.*



Apes' Lost Week-end

missed, fell down, picked herself up and wobbled back to the camp.

Two old boys who'd each failed to get to the trees under his own power tried helping one another. Time after time one would fall and the other would pull him to his feet, only to collapse himself. Repeatedly falling and getting up, they got almost to the grove, became confused and helped each other get up and fall down again all the way back to where they'd started.

By mid-morning nearly every adult in the troop had had a snootful. Babies and half-grown apes thronged lower limbs of nearby trees staring at their elders in ludicrous disbelief. Several times small groups of young ones, wanting to get to the brew, tried pushing through the mêlée. They were knocked higgledy-piggledy by milling "drunks", and retreated sullenly to protection of the trees.

In the background baboons watched from the slopes of a dark-red *kopje*. Practically naked, Masilo and Jappie leaped about among the drinkers snatching up the more helpless males and carrying them to the wagon cages. The apes, so fearful of humans when sober, seemed now to have no fear at all. Sometimes they shrieked when first picked up, but almost invariably snuggled down in the Kaffirs' arms, apparently content.

Occasionally, however, a tipsy ape would resent the natives and make ridiculous attempts to battle them. One old rascal got his hands in Jappie's hair, sank teeth in the lobe of his ear, shut his eyes and hung on. Jappie instantly became a leaping, shouting, hysterical ape himself. Baboons on the hillside, as if recognizing a kindred spirit, laughed and barked, leaping up and down in sympathy.

By eleven o'clock there were thirty-five apes in cages and about fifty females "sleeping it off" in the open. Things grew quiet and I thought the orgy was over for the day. It flared up

African Adventures

briefly though, when seven young males at the cans began fighting. The battle began when one fuddled youngster picked up a short stick and waving it, accidentally poked a companion in the belly. The victim squealed with rage. All seven apes sailed into one another, biting and clawing. In the struggle they knocked over the three cans that until then had miraculously remained upright. The young fellows seemed to realize what they'd done for they stopped fighting, grabbed up handfuls of liquor-soaked earth, tasted, spat, and wandered dejectedly back to the orange grove.

Finally the day's orgy was over and I had thirty-five husky male apes. One more big drinking party would fill the order. I'd intended sending Masilo and Jappie to Zecrust for more sugar, but they convinced me that sugar wasn't necessary. They gathered more *moopels* and spent the rest of the day chewing the *moopels* to a pulp. Next morning they chewed handfuls of corn meal until it was wet with saliva, then added it to the date pulp. They half-buried the cans this time to keep the monkeys from tipping them.

Five days later, the second orgy occurred. In almost every respect it was a repetition of the first except that this time Masilo, Jappie and Jan all got drunk too. Masilo, like all Zulus, hated Basutos, so it wasn't long before he was whamming their bare backs with his fighting stick. He chased the Basutos half-way up the *kopje*, came back and shouted to the apes:

"I kill rhinos with bare hands!" Then he fell down and refused to get up.

The frightened Basutos stayed on the hill for hours among the baboons. Working alone, I got thirty-one more apes into cages and on the twenty-first day after leaving Pretoria, delivered sixty-four healthy males to Jones. Jones said:

"You done good," so I began swanking a bit. My ego deflated quickly though, when Jones added:

Apes' Lost Week-end

"Next time, put the can of brew in the cages. The apes'll go in after it. All you'll have to do then is to pull the females out."

"Yes, sir," I said.

I SAID THAT MONKEYS feared nothing more than the dark. I should have added "except snakes". Snakes, poisonous or non-poisonous, drive monkeys into screaming hysterics. Chief terror of apes in South Africa is the *ringhals*—the spitting cobra. Its bite is deadly. It can squirt venom six feet with accuracy. In a man's eye the venom causes blindness, and often death. When you attack a *ringhals*, it pays to wear glasses.

One morning I glanced out through the open top half of the Dutch front door of an Orange farmhouse. Early sunlight lay golden on the packed-earth *stoep*.

Margie Thoms, eighteen-year-old blonde English visitor wearing a green bathing suit, lay on her stomach on the *stoep*, chin cupped in palms, reading a newspaper. And less than six inches from her feet a four-foot *ringhals* lay outstretched, tongue darting inquisitively towards Margie's bare heels.

Unaware, Margie moved slightly. The *ringhals* coiled, reared briefly, drew its head back on its coils. I said quietly:

"Don't move, Margie. There's a snake near your feet. Stay perfectly still for a moment—I'll . . ."

The girl gasped, drew in her legs and sat up, facing me. The open newspaper fell across her lap.

Instantly, the *ringhals* reared, hood flaring. But instead of spitting or striking, it slithered under the newspaper, pushing its head out close to Margie's body. Margie, terrified, leaned far back, bracing herself with her hands against the floor. I said

"Chin up, Margie. He won't hurt you if you don't move. I'll get him, but it'll take a few minutes. I can't shoot while he's coiled close like that and I can't walk across the porch. He'd feel the vibration. Sit absolutely still. I'll be back in a moment."

African Adventures

As I turned from the door Margie's heart began pounding so hard that the newspaper trembled. Immediately, nervous shifting of the *ringhals'* coils bulged the paper. His head lifted to the level of Margie's breast. The red tongue flickered momentarily, then the snake withdrew entirely underneath the newspaper where it stirred restlessly. I said:

"I'm sending for Hans, Margie. He's in the orchard and it'll take three or four minutes for him to get here. He'll kill the snake with his whip. Don't speak—and don't move."

I'll never forget that tortured girl's eyes.

I ran through the house into the kitchen. Jim, the big Kaffir cook, was on hands and knees, scrubbing the floor. I said:

"Jim, hurry to the orchard and get *Baas* Hans. Tell him a *ringhals*—on the front *stoep*—is coiled on Miss Margie's lap. I think he'll have to kill it with his ox-whip. Hurry, Jim. Then keep the Kaffirs—everybody—away from the *stoep* until the snake is dead. Understand, Jim?"

"*Yebo, Baas*," Jim rumbled and bounded out the door.

I took my .22 rifle from the gun rack, but stood, breathing deeply to quiet the thumping of my own heart, before hurrying back to Margie. If I had to shoot, I'd have to be calm. I wasn't too worried about Hans du Toit's ability to kill the snake with his whip. Like most South African Boers, Hans was an expert with the long-handled, long-lashed ox-whip. With a bamboo handle eight feet long, a tapered raw-hide lash of thirteen feet and, on the end of the lash, a thin, three-foot, pliable raw-hide "stinger", the whip was twenty-four feet in length—and Hans's special delight.

He'd often boasted that he could flick a fly from the ear of an ox with his whip—at twenty feet. I'd seen him, at that distance, cut the neck from a ginger-beer bottle. His favourite trick was to place a silver two-shilling piece on the ground, walk seven long paces away, turn, and send the lash hissing out

Apes' Lost Week-end

• to flick the coin high into the air. As often as not, he'd move up, let the coin and catch it as it fell.

I went back to the open top of the door. Margie seemed in a trance—eyes closed, lips grey. Her heart seemed quiet. Only the tip of the *ringhals'* tail was visible from beneath the paper.

Young Hans, whip in hands, stepped round the corner of the *stoep*. His face was drawn and white—for he was deeply in love with this beautiful English girl. For a moment he looked the situation over, then said to me:

“We've got to get it out from under the paper. Find Meiling, Margie's Peke, and bring him to the door.”

I'd noticed the little dog asleep on the sofa in the living-room when I'd gone to the kitchen so I picked him up and held him at the door. Hans said:

“Hold him there a minute.”

Margie opened her eyes, then closed them.

Hans was standing in bright sunlight a good twenty-one feet from the newspaper. Slowly, taking a “sighting” shot, he sent the long lash snaking back over his shoulder, then with a flowing motion, drove it forward. The stinger-tip settled like a feather at the near edge of the newspaper. Hans stepped back a few inches, withdrew the lash, looked at me and said tightly:

“Put the dog down and push him towards Margie.” Then, to her, he said:

“It'll be over in a moment, *Hartlum*. Just don't move.”

Margie seemed not to have heard him.

I put the Peke down and gave him a push in Margie's direction, but he turned, looked up at me and then began pawing at the bottom of the door—wanting to go back to his lazy, comfortable nap. Then the newspaper rustled and the Peke walked hesitatingly towards the noise. Suddenly he sensed the snake, rushed close, put his head on his paws and began to yip.

The *ringhals* reacted instantly. It reared high, shoving the

African Adventures

newspaper aside. Its evil neck arched until the fangs pointed at the dog. Its three white bands below the throat flashed white against the dirty grey of its skin—and Hans's whip struck swiftly.

The snake seemed to leap into the air, then—in two halves—it fell a good five feet away. The tail-half writhed and flipped. The head-half lay still, but the protruding fangs dripped venom.

Hans picked Margie up in his arms and carried her into the house.

The Peke yipped frantically at the still-living head of the *ringhals*. I placed the muzzle of my .22 close to one staring eye and pulled the trigger.

A LION FOR MUSSOLINI

IN DECEMBER 1937 I SIGNED an agreement to kill lions in front of the movie camera of Gennaro Boggio, photographer for the Italian Ministry of Education. Later, Benito Mussolini was to be dubbed-in for me—the idea being to prove to the recently conquered Ethiopians that *Il Duce* was a mighty Nimrod.

For centuries the lion had been the official symbol of Ethiopia. The head-dresses of army officers had been manes of lions they themselves had killed. Mussolini wanted a head-dress and it was to be bigger and better than anyone else's. The film was to show him shooting the lion in a roaring, charging close-up.

Boggio had arrived at my hunting camp east of the Lunga River in Northern Rhodesia, with four Bechuana porters, five cameras and a letter of introduction from someone in the American Consul's office at Johannesburg. I hesitated about taking the job because it's difficult to make lions charge; and next to impossible to find a lion with a mane that's not brush-torn and ragged. When Boggio showed me a draft for £600 on Barclay's Dominion, Colonial and Overseas Bank, however, I signed.

Boggio was a wisp of a man with a big, black soup-strainer moustache, and he never smiled. I got the impression that he believed he'd be shot if he returned to Italy with an unsatisfactory film. At any rate, he acted that way.

The very next morning after I'd signed the agreement,

African Adventures

Boggio was all hot to go after lions, but when I explained I'd first have to prepare three buffalo heads for shipment to a Pretoria taxidermist, he took his hand camera and went off on a hunt of his own. About noon as Horo, my Bushman top tracker, and I were putting the skinned skulls on an ant-heap for the ants to clean, Boggio came a-running, waving his arms and shouting:

“Big lions! Big voices! Hurry!”

“Voices?” I said. “You mean that roaring out there?”

“Si! Hurry, please, *Signor*.”

“Those are ostriches booming,” I said. “Lions don't roar in daylight.”

Boggio didn't seem to believe me so I told Twak, my second boy, to take him out and show him the big birds. “Be careful, Boggio,” I said, “ostriches can be more dangerous than lions.”

“Why you make joke?” Boggio asked.

“I'm not joking,” I said. “Ostriches have been known to break a lion's back with one kick.”

Boggio was astounded. “B-but, the lion! My God, he is the king!”

“Boggio,” I said, “instead of going out to look at the ostriches, let's go to camp. We'll have a spot of tea and I'll tell you some of the facts of life.”

So while Boggio alternately sipped tea and tongued drippings from his moustache, I also sipped tea as I proceeded to disillusion him.

“Lions seldom live up to the myth that they're creatures of magnificent beauty, courage and ferocity. Actually they're tick-cursed; and usually cowardly in the face of superior force. In every country in Africa except Kenya and Tanganyika, lions are officially classed as *vermin*. That means, 'noxious and disgusting' animals. And, as vermin, they may be slaughtered without licences, in unlimited numbers.

A Lion for Mussolini

“Normally, lion-shooting is one of the professional hunter’s most monotonous jobs. And no experienced white hunter has ever been killed by a lion except through his own foolishness or carelessness.

“Unless pestered beyond endurance, lions attend strictly to their own business, and kill only for food. But they’re scavengers, and won’t bother game if there are carcasses to feed on. They never kill a large antelope if they can get a small one, nor do they attack a healthy beast if they can get a sick one, or a ~~cripple~~. Where mice are plentiful, the ‘regal’ lion makes them his chief item of diet.

“As to being King of the Beasts, the only elephants, rhinos or hippos a lion will attack are babies that wander away from their herds. Single lions seldom attack large antelope such as koodoo, sable and buffalo. Lions hunt these big fellows in packs. I once watched a buffalo cow rout three lions. She gored one, trampled the second and chased the third.

“And man-eaters? Well, men eat more lions than lions eat men. Man-eating lions are few, and those few are almost always old, toothless, or sick animals too feeble to run down game. If you can’t kill a man-eater, feed him. Leave an antelope or a sheep for him once every ten days or so and you’ll no longer have a man-eater.

“Everywhere in Africa, lion country is about the same—sandy or bush-dotted plains—boulder-strewn or grass-carpeted veldt. And the habits and characteristics of lions in one part of the country are the same as those in other parts. They live in families of from three to fifteen animals. When food is plentiful they seldom roam more than fifteen miles from their sleeping place. In times of scarcity they follow the game herds.

“Lions are sleepy animals. It’s not unusual to come across whole families of them asleep on the open veldt. Several times I’ve stood with rifle ready while Wanda Vik Persen, of Stock-

African Adventures

holm, photographed the 'sleeping beauties' from thirty yards. Sometimes I'd have to throw stones at their bellies to make them look interesting. And about all the stones did was to bring the cats to their feet, snarling and switching their tails. Often as not, they'd lie down and begin to snore. Sometimes they'd stalk indignantly for thirty or forty yards before lying down again.

"When not sleeping, lions are usually playing. They act like kittens—mauling, pouncing, wrestling. Occasionally when a half-grown male begins fooling around an older female, the lady's husband will knock the youngster heels over head with a solid cuff. I've teased and pestered family groups many times in an effort to get a lion to charge for the camera. I've succeeded only four times."

Boggio had listened to my discourse with increasing agitation. Now he stood up and began making angry noises in his throat. He said:

"Why you tell lie to me?"

"You're not a big game photographer, Boggio," I said.
"How come the Italian Government gave you this job?"

"Gennaro Boggio is famous for pictures! I photograph every animal in the zoo in Rome. I know about every animal. I know about lions. I read all the books. I see lions in many American cinemas. I know lions bite, charge, charge, charge. Why you tell lie?"

"Sure, Boggio, lions charge, and bite, and claw, and kill—if they're wounded or badgered beyond endurance. A cornered lion will fight for his life as a cornered rat, or snake, or man will fight for his. It might cheer you up to know that a *desperate* lion can be the most dangerous animal in Africa—for a few minutes. He's the fastest animal on earth. He can charge 100 yards in four seconds. That's time enough for only two *aimed* shots if you let the first one off when he starts his rush. If you

A Lion for Mussolini

miss that one you'd better drop him with the next, for by the time you let that one off, the lion is only one second—two short jumps—from the gun.

"Fast as he is, a charging lion is duck soup for a cool-nerved, accurate rifleman. The beast's leaps are low and he's coming head-on. Let your shot off as his forefeet hit the ground at the end of a jump. Aim at the chest, just below the chin. There's a good chance your bullet will catch heart, lungs, liver and maybe kidneys. Unless you're sure you can put a bullet between his eyes, don't try a head shot. Men have died because they thought there was some skull beneath that mop of hair. There isn't. Lions have almost no skull above the eyes.

"There's no point in using heavy-calibred rifles on lions. *The big cats can't be killed by shock.* A lion with twenty-three slugs in its body—five of them .450s—killed his man. Anyway, a .270 in a vital spot kills as quickly as a .600 and isn't nearly so messy.

"Because they'd rather run than fight, most lions are killed with a back-side shot. That's exactly the reverse of the chest shot; the bullet penetrates the kidneys first, then the liver, lungs and heart."

By this time Boggio was looking happier and I decided to let him discover any further dope about lions for himself.

"So, Boggio," I said, "what we have to do is to find a lion with a good mane, then drive him half-crazy with either fear, or pain."

Next morning an hour before dawn, we set out. The great valley was good lion country; plenty of game for them to feed on; few hunters. I'd seen lions to the west only a few days before, but hunted to the north-east because the western plain was boggy from recent rains. Northward and eastward the veldt was open and park-like. Dry-season fires had burned off

African Adventures

the matted grasses and the new grass was short and bright green. The only trees for as far as the eye could see were those that grew on scattered low elevations. It was to the shade of such trees that lions retired after hours of snoozing, frolicking and rodent-hunting on the flats.

I sent Horo and Twak ahead to locate lions. They were armed with long spears and each carried a small, powerful bow from which he ordinarily shot poisoned arrows. I say "ordinarily" for I'd forbidden them to use, or even to carry, poison while working for me. Bushmen make the stuff by mixing caterpillar guts with milk of the euphoria tree. It's so deadly that a single drop on a scratched finger will cause death within the hour.

The Bechuana boys carried cameras, tarpaulins, blankets, cornmeal, pots and odds and ends of camp gear. Mokansa, my cook-boy, luggered two bandoliers of cartridges and my extra .303. Boggio struggled along with a movie camera and a tripod almost as long as himself.

Every step we took was a joy to a hunter's heart. Small herds of zebra, buffalo, tsessebec, koodoo and wildebeeste turned towards us and stared in mild surprise. A rhino started up from the base of a tree and snorted off in a silly trot, tail up, ears milling. Giraffes, eyes popping with curiosity, watched us until we came within fifty feet, then turned and "floated" away, long necks all slanting at the same angle. Honeybirds screamed. Long-tailed songsters started up from the grass. Groups of black-and-white crows squawked insults at us. Secretary birds stalked about like little, old, stooped book-keepers with hands beneath long coat-tails. A lion got to his feet from behind a grass clump, stalked away looking back over his shoulder until he got behind a bush, then hightailed it in a most undignified lope, to better cover. Our feet got hot; loads grew heavy. Ants got inside our shirts and chased one another round our belts.

A Lion for Mussolini

The heat mirage slanted listlessly across the ground. Except for birds, the veldt was silent.

Once in a while, Boggio, who scarcely shifted his fascinated eyes from the game, fell into a wart-hog hole. Towards evening he tumbled into one and broke the tripod. He crawled out cursing, mended the tripod with adhesive tape from the first-aid kit, and twenty minutes later, while trying to sneak up on a buffalo heifer, sprawled into another hole, breaking the tripod again.

Just before we made camp under trees on a bit of wooded rising ground, a herd of zebra that had been watching us suddenly turned to watch a male lion approach them. As if following a command, they opened up a passage and let the lion stalk through them.

Boggio, using the back of a kneeling Bechuana boy for a tripod, ground out film, his face almost stupid with amazement. When the lion had disappeared and the zebras were grazing again, he said:

“I do not believe!”

“Herds aren’t afraid of lions except when lions are on the prowl for food,” I said. “Natives say that when a lion’s hungry enough to kill, he develops a ‘hunger’ smell. If that smell isn’t present, herds—particularly wildebeeste, zebra and gazelles—permit lions to wander among them at will.”

Boggio shook his head and walked away chewing one side of his moustache. Horo said:

“Rain-wind come, O Hunter.”

Sure enough the wind had switched to the north, which meant rain before morning. It also meant that lions would be on the prowl. In good weather you won’t hear a lion roar from month’s end to month’s end; but let it storm and they grunt, moan and roar the night through.

African Adventures

We built two fires, heaped up supplies of extra firewood, made pup tents of our tarps; and because the earth's from ten to fifteen degrees warmer four inches below the surface, we scooped shallow pits to sleep in. We put Boggio's cameras and my spare rifle and ammunition in a hollow tree. We ate broiled haunches of a zebra colt I'd shot in the afternoon; then, with the boys taking turns keeping fires, we rolled in our blankets and slept, feet to the heat.

The rain and the lions came shortly past midnight. I listened to the roaring for a while, but heard no moaning, so went back to sleep—everything was to the good. Lions that don't moan, aren't hungry.

Rain continued for three days and nights and Boggio grew increasingly morose. Several times he tried to get flashlight shots when lions came so close to camp that their eyes reflected the firelight, but only one flash was set off—and that, by a hyena.

By noon of the fourth day the sun was out and the ground steaming. Horo, Twak, Boggio and I went looking for a lion with a satisfactory mane. But before we'd gone five miles, mist closed in. Even experienced veldt-rats sometimes get lost in the pea-soup mists, so we sat down in the open to wait it out. To keep busy, Boggio set up his tripod and camera, wiped the lens, then covered everything with his coat. Horo and Twak slept on the wet grass. Boggio and I sat silent, staring at nothing. Towards mid-afternoon the mist became tinged with lavender and drew away from us until we could see for a couple of hundred yards, but with no perspective. A clump of hooked-thorn bushes one hundred yards away seemed taller than trees.

The sun struggled through the overcast, turning the lavender to gold. Suddenly came a roar that seemed to bounce against us from every side. Horo and Twak leaped to their feet, grabbed their bows and took off at a run as I flipped the safety

A Lion for Mussolini

catch of my rifle and whirled towards the thorn bush cluster. There he was—the lion of Boggio's dreams! Five hundred pounds, at least, and a mane so dark it looked black! In the weird light the big cat seemed as tall as the bushes. He was about ninety yards away, facing us, switching his tail.

I glanced at Boggio. No need to worry about Boggio's nerves—he'd removed his coat from the camera and was adjusting the lens as calmly as if about to take a picture of a baby.

Then I saw Horo and Twak. Bows at the ready, they were coming up behind the lion. Horo let fly with a small arrow. I knew he was trying to sting the big cat into a charging rage. He did it. The arrow hit the lion in the behind and the beast rose high in a roaring jump, kicking out his hind legs like a bronco. Then he put his head on the ground, lifted his hind-quarters, dropped his tail like a kicked dog, and gave forth with an astonishing mixture of grunts, roars and coughs.

Boggio, blowing his moustache outward with rapid puffs, ground away at the crank. I checked my backsight for close work, took a look to be sure a cartridge was in the chamber and lifted my eyes to see the lion coming full-tilt. Boggio said:

“Get in the picture, *Signor, please!*”

The lion had come fifty yards by the time I'd stepped to a spot satisfactory to Boggio. I lined my sights on the animal's chest, took a deep breath and firmed the trigger. I'd shoot when the cat's forefeet hit ground on the next jump—figuring that would bring him to a slithering stop at my feet.

But the lion never made that next jump. Even as he sprang, he faltered, stumbled and buried his nose in the grass. He was up again in an instant, running towards us, then wobbled and sat down, head low.

Boggio, still grinding, turned to me, tears rolling down his cheeks. “Why you shoot?” he asked. “My God, the picture for *Il Duce*, and you shoot!”

African Adventures

“I didn’t shoot, Boggio,” I said, and walked towards the lion. He was panting, muscles quivering. Horo and Twak ran up, grinning all over their faces. I said:

“I told you damned heathen not to bring poisoned arrows.”

Then I put the muzzle of my rifle in the lion’s ear and pulled the trigger. The big fellow collapsed, sighed and lay still.

Boggio stared at the dead lion, shoulders slumped, moustache drooping. I saw his hands trembling. He said:

“A magnificent charge and it go poop! I think at first that you shoot. Why he swoon?”

“The arrow was a poisoned one. Watch.” I pulled the arrow from the lion’s rump and shoved the tip into a pool of blood that still welled from the head wound. The blood began to foam and bubble. “That’s what happens in the veins,” I said. “When the foaming blood reaches the heart—*caput*.”

“He was beautiful, *Signor*,” Boggio said.

And I suddenly understood, as I watched the little man pick up his camera and begin walking towards our camp site, how desperately he wanted to get an outstanding sequence. He’d probably been pushed around all his life. Success with the lions would do something for his soul.

During the next three weeks we must have scouted fifty males. All were hopeless. A couple of females—always more courageous than their consorts, made half-hearted rushes at us. Boggio got some good stuff, but nothing that would suit *Il Duce*’s requirements. The weather grew warm. Grass rose from ankle to knee height. Game of all kinds swarmed into the valley, and lions, vultures and hyenas lived on the fat of the land.

Then one afternoon as we circled a banyan tree we came on a family of five—a big male, two females and two cubs. The male, except for a lighter-coloured mane, seemed a replica of the big one who’d died so ignobly.



Above: An extremely rare picture of a month-old rhino standing beside his mother's foreleg.
Below: A picture by Arthur Aylcough of the elephant attacked by Ubusuku (see chapter 6).



Above: Jumping Watutsis of the Congo.

Below: Miki Carter (who photographed the Watutsis) on his camera boom over boiling rapids near Stanley Falls. The tall stakes are a fish trap.

A Lion for Mussolini

We did everything we could think of to anger the lion. Our natives formed a half-circle behind him and rushed him, yelling. He deserted his family and went bounding away. Two days later we spotted him on an open veldt. I put a bullet into the ground beside him. He raced one hundred yards, got behind a bush and peeked at us over its top.

In mating season lions often go into frenzy when their love-making is interfered with. This wasn't mating time, but I thought maybe the beast might make a show of anger if I killed one of his mates, so, as he lay beside one of the females out in the open a few days later, I shot her. At the sound of the gun the male jumped high. All four feet were churning as he hit the ground. He galloped about fifty yards, turned and came back to the dead female. He sniffed her, pushed her with his paws, got his teeth into the scruff of her neck and tried to pull her. Boggio moved to within thirty yards, then twenty, then fifteen. The lion looked up, stared at Boggio, wheeled and ran.

Boggio, angered by the lion's refusal to act for the camera, lost his good sense and ran after the beast. At that point, Fate took over.

Boggio fell into an old rhino wallow.

The lion, about one hundred and fifty yards away, turned at the noise of Boggio's cursing—and charged. And Boggio, on his knees, rested the camera on the wallow's edge and began to crank.

Meanwhile I raced for position about twenty feet ahead and a bit to the right of the camera. The lion came grunting—in great, forty-foot leaps. I shot him in mid-jump, sixty feet from the lens. I heard the thud of the bullet as it hit, but he never faltered. I was pushing the bolt home for a second shot as the big cat flashed past me—straight for Boggio.

He swiped the little man with a forepaw, knocking him at least fifteen yards. Boggio lay still. The lion stood over him,

African Adventures

switching his tail and coughing blobs of blood. I fired. The lion dropped, then struggled to his feet and came at me in a sort of jerky wobble. I shot again, between the eyes.

Boggio's shirt was ripped and blood-soaked and I knelt to examine his hurts. Two claws had opened the flesh of his shoulder to the bone. A wrist was broken. Twak came running with the first-aid kit and I opened the bottle of mercurochrome and began to pour it into Boggio's wounds. Boggio sat up, pushed me aside and staggered to the rhino wallow. His camera lay on the bottom of the wallow—unhurt. He picked it up, wrapped his arms round it, then looked at me and said:

“I cranked until he hit me. His picture is safe in here.”

Then for the first time on the trip, he smiled.

BORN CAMERA HUNTERS LIKE Boggio seem to have no fear of animals. I've worked with the best—Miki Carter, Wanda Vic Persen, Martin Johnson, Hsu Punggeh, and Jose Antonio Coimbra. I've seen them within seconds of a crushing or a fanged death and always, they were smiling.

I once came across an animal artist who'd set up his easel within twenty yards of a water-hole patronized by elephants, rhinos, buffalo and lions. He worked alone; didn't even have a native camp boy.

On the Zambezi River while acting as gun support for Hollywood's Miki Carter, who was photographing a herd of mating hippos, one of the rampaging males rushed our boat, his open jaws revealing a vast, red interior. Miki leaned out-board trying, it seemed, to get a close-up of the beast's tonsils. He yelled to me:

“Don't shoot. This is wonderful colour.”

“Then stop rocking the boat,” I said. But Miki kept right on exposing film.

Another male surfaced behind us and the swell from his rising

A Lion for Mussolini

pushed us nearer to Miki's bellowing subject. The boat swung round, taking Miki and his clicking camera within eight feet of the gaping, big-tusked mouth. My bullet went down the animal's throat and he sank without a struggle. Then I started the outboard motor and zig-zagged out of the herd.

Several frames of that particular film of Miki's were completely filled with nothing but a close-up of the hippo's eye.

Yes, professional camera-hunters are a race apart. With most of them, however, the gun-support holds the key to life and death. Not so with the Cantonese naturalist, Hsu Punggeh, who specialized in close-ups of deadly snakes. I was with him once when, from six feet, he photographed a high-rearing, hissing, eleven-foot black mamba—the deadliest serpent in Africa. For several nerve-tightening moments "Pung" was within a half-second of death.

The black mamba is fast. During the Zulu War, one chased and killed an Imperial army officer fleeing on horseback. When Oom Paul Kruger, first President of the Transvaal Republic, was leading a patrol against the British, a twelve-foot black mamba leaped among his men, killing three of them, and, for good measure, also killing two dogs. Zulus call the black mamba "The-Snake-that-Walks-on-his Tail" because it travels on the lower half of its body, the upper half reared so that the head seems to glide swiftly along above four-foot grass. Zulus also call the mamba *Muri:-Wa-Lesu* (The Shadow of Death).

Men bitten by a black mamba sometimes die within ten minutes. Few live longer than an hour. At mating time the mamba is the most vicious and dangerous of the cobras. His attack is like a lightning stroke. When he bites, he chews—squirting venom with each chew. He flashes down hills like a dark streak, sailing over seven- and eight-foot bushes in his path. He is so powerful that he occasionally knocks down the men he strikes.

African Adventures

It was a balmy afternoon, with the four-foot veldt-grass golden in sunlight. Pung and I sat under a thorn tree to smoke our pipes, having first trampled the grass flat for several yards around. Puffing reflectively, Pung quoted from Li Po:

Gently I stir a white feather fan,
With open shirt sitting in a green wood.
I take off my cap and hang it on a jutting stone;
A wind from the pine-trees trickles on my bare head.

Homesick Pung began another verse:

I sat drinking and did not notice the dusk,
Till falling petals filled the folds of my dress.
Drunken I rose and walked to . . .

His voice ceased as a yard-long bright-red snake, striped with white down the length of the back, wriggled towards us over the trodden grass. Pung reached for his camera, and the snake—frightened—writhed past us and up into the thorn tree.

“That snake has no business here,” Pung exclaimed. “His habitat is the Cameroons. Only two have ever been captured. I must have this fellow.”

It wasn’t too difficult to follow the snake’s progress among the dusty-grey limbs of the tree. We would lose sight of it for minutes, then sunlight would flash on its red hide. The snake climbed awkwardly, making short forays on side-limbs, seeking a way to the tree-top. When it disappeared into an abandoned secretary-bird’s nest, Pung said:

“We’ve got to get up to that nest.”

“Those curved thorns are like a million great fish-hooks,” I warned. “They’d tear us to pieces.”

“We can trim branches—make a sort of tunnel through the boughs.”

“Or, wait down here until the snake descends.”

Pung shook his head. “No,” he said, “if that snake’s eaten recently he may stay in the nest for days. Anyway, he’s more

A Lion for Mussolini

apt to come down at night than in daylight. We've got to climb the tree."

That wasn't easy. We had left our natives in camp, and we had only skinning knives to work with. We hacked away, getting snared and snagged until we bled from scores of tiny wounds. It took over an hour to clear a thornless area ten feet up the trunk. We needed a platform from which to work higher into the tree, so criss-crossed cut branches until we had a "floor" strong enough to bear our weight. On this, about eight feet above the ground, we sat and rested.

Pung kept his eyes on the nest above us, but mine strayed out over the veldt. About fifty feet from our tree was a large, flat, red rock, perhaps sixteen feet square. About twelve inches of its top rose above the four-foot grass. A faint trail darkened the grass from the base of the rock to a long, low native hut about three hundred yards away. The trail had evidently been made by someone from the hut who came out to the rock occasionally.

I noticed movement in the tall grass about one-hundred feet down the trail and watched it idly. What appeared to be a black knob on the end of a thick stick, raised abruptly out of the grass—a black mamba. It seemed nervous, for it turned its head this way and that. I nudged Pung.

"It scuses us," I said. "It's his mating season—he's probably pretty touchy."

Pung grabbed his camera and dropped to the ground.

"Don't be a fool, Pung," I called.

Pung made no reply, but ambled off, putting the rock between himself and the mamba. Grumbling, I, too, dropped from the tree, picked up my shotgun from where it leaned against the trunk and followed Pung. I felt silly, for shotgun-support for snake-hunters isn't worth much—not if the hunters are close-up fiends—like Pung. When a camera's only feet away from an angry, threatening snake, the cameraman is apt

African Adventures

to get as many scattering pellets as the serpent. I've seen it happen.

With me at his heels, Pung, crouching low, moved round the rock to a point where he could see the spot where the mamba had reared. The big snake had disappeared.

"That mamba's somewhere close by," I said as I scrambled to the rock's top and reached down a hand to pull Pung up beside me. He shook off my hand, and standing perfectly still, with camera ready, searched the grass around him.

"Watch out!" I shouted as the mamba's head, looking like a small bulldog's, popped over the grass-tops less than ten feet away. It was a male, and I knew he was angry by the way he kept puffing out his neck. Mambas haven't the flaring cobra hood, but their necks swell a little when they're furious.

Pung raised his camera to look through the finder. The mamba darted to within six feet of the lens, reared higher, hissed, turned his head to one side and glared at Pung with one unblinking, metallic-black eye.

For a few moments, Pung, the mamba and I stood absolutely motionless. My shotgun was in my hands, but I didn't dare lift it to aim; the snake was so close its fangs would have been in Pung's flesh before I could squeeze the trigger.

The snake glared coldly, darting its tongue. I noticed that the tongue looks red, then goes black, then red again, and I noticed also the mamba's skin was not black in the sunlight, but brownish-green.

The mamba hissed, which, at close quarters, usually means a strike. Pung moved his camera to the left and the mamba swayed in the same direction. Then Pung moved the camera across his front to the right and again the snake swayed with it. Slowly, left and right the camera swung, and slowly left and right the mamba swung the upper part of its body. It was "The Dance of Death".

"I'm going to shoot, Pung," I cried.

A Lion for Mussolini

As I raised my gun, the camera clicked. Within a fraction of a second, the mamba had disappeared in the grass. I dropped my shotgun, got hold of Pung's shoulders and jerked him up on the rock.

"Let's get back into the thorn tree, Pung," I said, "if we don't, you'll lose your red snake."

"I have obedient ears," Pung replied.

Back in the tree, we hacked our way to the nest and tore it apart, but the red snake, too, was gone.

THE KING'S EMERALDS

UBUSUKU, MY ZULU TRACKER, used to say: "Courage makes its home in the heart of the kind man."

It's true. I have never seen a truly kind man, white or black, who was a coward.

George Vossos was a kindly man. He was an Armenian-Greek who hired me to take him after antelope in Nyasaland. He was big and fat, and underneath the fat were mighty muscles. Most fat men become lean after a few weeks on the veldt. Not so George. We were out for more than five months and although he foot-slogged it with me mile for mile, he never lost a pound.

We started hunting west of Nyasaland's red dust country. George bagged a few antelope and was proud of his trophies. He'd look at them and say:

"Good man, Vossos. With one mouth I saying it."

Our hunt would probably have been only routine had not George tried to shoot an ostrich. When he saw the big male bird with its magnificent white plumes, his eyes sparkled as he said:

"Such feathers I must having for I discerning that they putting yeast in my wife."

When we first spotted the big cock he was with two hens. I could tell by their actions that they had chicks. That meant that when the cock saw us he'd try to draw us away. Had we been in bushless country, he'd have started off with a limp,

The King's Emeralds

leading us on and on, the limp becoming less evident the farther we got from his family. Here among the bushes the wise, old bird played a different game.

The females disappeared. I knew, of course, that they were squatting, necks low, and that the cute little grey-brown pullet-size chicks were also lying doggo, pretending to be rocks or grass-clumps. George and I walked slowly towards the beautiful black-and-white male who stood watching us with neck stiff and straight, feet shuffling impatiently.

George knelt and aimed his .256. The ostrich ducked behind a large bush. George chuckled and tip-toed slowly forward, skirted the bush like a stalking Indian, then stood staring with slack jaw. The ostrich had vanished.

George didn't think to look for the bird's spoor, and I didn't remind him. He glanced at me from the corners of his eyes and asked:

“What you theenk?”

I pointed to the male ostrich about one hundred yards away. He was staring at us exactly as before. This time, George didn't kneel, but threw up his rifle only to have the ostrich scurry behind another bush.

George said: “Hah!”, pulled his old felt hat down to his ears and charged across space as if he meant to bayonet the bird. He peered through the bush, then began circling on hands and knees. When the bush hid him from me, I listened for curses, but all was still. When I caught up with him, he glared:

“Why you no telling me he being mirage?”

I pointed to the bird's spoor. “He's putting bushes between him and us and running like hell when we can't see him,” I said. “He's leading us away from his babies back there.”

“Babies?”

“Yes—little pullet-size chicks.”

“No mama?”

African Adventures

“Two mamas. I saw them.”

George burst out angrily: “Why you telling me about thees babies? I now cannot shooting the papa.”

“Good man, George,” I smiled. “Some day I’ll show you a papa ostrich that has no babies. Then you can get feathers to put that yeast in your wife.”

George laughed. “That wife!” he said proudly. Thereafter, before he’d shoot at anything, he’d ask:

“He having babies?”

I never quite understood his philosophy, but it had something to do with his wartime experiences. He once said:

“Soldiers going that day to shooting papas and papas and papas. What those papas’ babies do, huh? So I having tears and going away from that war.”

We hunted another week, but George had lost interest in Nyasaland. One night as we gnawed at roasted duikerbok haunches, he said:

“I having a feeling to go far. Maybe to other ocean.” He pointed west. “What is the ending of there?”

“Angola. Portuguese East Africa.”

“They having ostriches?”

“Sure. We can cut straight across Northern Rhodesia. Across swamps, mountains, plain, forest, desert and bush. We’d probably see ostriches all the way.”

“We go,” George said.

I thought he was fooling, but he wasn’t. Next morning he sent his Kaffirs to Balantyre with his trophies. About noon we set off due west—George, my two Kaffirs, myself and our ox wagon. George’s clothes were identical with mine—a strong shirt, tough pants, heavy-soled boots and an old felt hat. We each had a rubberized sheet for sleeping on wet ground, four blankets, two rifles, a 12-gauge shotgun, a skinning knife, a hatchet and lots of ammunition. When we made camp, one

The King's Emeralds

Kaffir scouted wood for the fire, the other took the oxen to graze. Both natives slept beside their fire. George and I slept under the wagon and, when it rained, hung a tarp on the windward side.

Where snakes were numerous, each of us—Kaffirs and Whites—slept snuggled up to the belly of an ox. The big beasts sensed snakes that came close, and waked us with their shivering, moaning and snorting. Even then, we threw off our blankets only after ascertaining that no snakes had crawled in with us.

Nothing, not even snakes, seemed to faze George. Nothing, that is, but chameleons. The first one he saw—crouching on a branch—cocked one eye forward and the other eye backward. George quavered:

“They loose—the eyes of him!”

While I was explaining that chameleons can move each eye independently, the little reptile flicked out its six-inch tongue and a blue-moth vanished down its gullet. George grunted in disbelief. The chameleon brought its big, round, protruding, backward-looking eye to bear on George, while the other eye swivelled upward to watch a hovering butterfly. George gasped and backed away.

“The chameleon,” I said, “has two nervous systems—one for each side. Sometimes one half is asleep while the other's awake. Walk close to him, George, and shade him with your hand.”

“No I not liking he look at me.”

I said: “Then stand where you are, and watch.”

I walked slowly to the side from which the sun shone, held up my open hand until its shade fell on the chameleon. At once, the reptile's shaded side turned almost black. The other side remained a sort of lavender-grey. George said:

“They being loose too—the colours.”

The chameleon's eyes swivelled about; legs on one side

African Adventures

behaved as if they wanted to run. The bird-like claws of the feet on the other side clung to the branch. I withdrew my hand and the side of the little beast on which the sun now shone brightly, turned almost white. George grunted. The chameleon stood erect, feet clutching the twig. It curled its long, tapering tail downwards, lifted one front foot and rolled one eye at George. George took two steps backwards. The chameleon vanished among the leaves. George muttered. I said:

“What?”

“Why he hating me?”

I laughed. “He doesn’t hate you, George. If you’d catch and feed him, he’d become a cute pet.”

“In that loose eyes of him I seeing he hating me like hell,” George replied.

The farther we trekked the more plentiful the game. Small herds of antelope were everywhere. All except the springbok were easy to approach even in short grass, and we seldom had to take a shot at more than seventy-five yards. George was good with a rifle, but by the time we got into the country north of Lukanga Swamp, he was missing almost every shot. One morning when I accused him of missing a duikerbok deliberately, he looked embarrassed and said:

“He making his ears at me and I thinking he liking me. So my bullet, he missing him.”

“George,” I said, “maybe we’d better call this trip off.”

“No,” he said. “It is for me the winds and the nice smells and the little birds. And also the bugs.”

A day or two later during the early afternoon heat as I dozed in the shade of the wagon I heard George laugh and looked up to see him standing under an acacia tree watching a Tommy gazelle sporting in the knee-high grass. The little antelope, not much bigger than a large hare, was dancing stiff-legged, his small tail flicking and flirting joyously.

The King's Emeralds

George was beaming like the morning sun. Our two Kaffirs lay on their bellies nearby, chins in hands, watching George with amusement. I thought idly how remarkable that a gazelle, usually terrified at the sound of a human voice, sensed that in George there was nothing to fear.

After several minutes the Tommy bounded away, stopping twice to dance again in the sunlight.

Toward evening I walked out across the veldt, spotted a Tommy and shot it. The Kaffirs roasted it; took the forelegs and went to their own fire. I cut a slice from a haunch, speared it on the point of my knife and handed it to George. He shook his head.

"I am having tears in the middle of me. I thinking you killing my Tommy."

"No," I said. "This is a different one."

"I thinking maybe it being the wife of my Tommy."

"No. This is a male."

"Maybe he being papa."

"Look, George," I said. "You're carrying things too far. It's all right to be soft-hearted. It's all right for you to quit killing animals. But, remember that this antelope died quickly and painlessly. If he'd lived, he'd certainly have died violently, later. Few African animals die natural deaths. Before his heart stops beating, the lordly lion, lying down to die of old age, is torn to bits by hyenas and vultures. The dying rhino becomes the harvest of ants. The elephant in the mud and water of a swamp to cool his last fevered moments, becomes food for crocodiles and fish. A man's got to have meat—eat up, now."

George got up to walk away, but paused to say:

"He was gold in the sun on him, the Tommy. Then the wind coming under his hair and he making like white under the gold. He was happy on the inside of him and he cannot stop it—the dancing in his legs."

African Adventures

“Yeah,” I said.

Our trek became a slow and happier one. The sound of a rifle was seldom heard. George didn’t stop eating meat, but ate more of other things. He was particularly fond of big, white mushrooms that grew on abandoned ant hills. Those mushrooms weigh up to four pounds and are a delicacy when lightly fried in hippo lard. Large red mushrooms were plentiful too, but they were poisonous.

The abdomens of some species of black ants contain an acid that gives an intriguing tang to salads, especially to the somewhat harsh-tasting greens gathered from the dry veldt. George liked the ant flavour and once when no black ants were available, he tried red ants. He might as well have used red pepper.

Animals—particularly the zebra, antelope and wildebeest—seemed to know they were safe with us for they permitted us to go close—sometimes to within fifty yards. On the few occasions when we came upon lions sleeping or lolling in the shade of scattered trees, we sometimes moved within fifteen yards before they became alarmed and loped away.

George got pleasure from small things that most hunters miss. He studied the activities of bugs, beetles, spiders, tarantulas, lizards, frogs, turtles, bees and ants. He’d sit for hours on a hummock watching scavenger beetles roll dung into balls as large as golf balls, then lower their heads, raise their hind feet and propel the balls backwards to suitable soil and bury them. When a ball’s progress was stopped by a pebble or stick, George would watch the beetle’s struggles for a time, then say:

“Stop having a troubles little bugs,” and remove the obstruction, smiling as the beetle resumed its task.

“Why thees bugs hiding the balls?” he asked the first time he watched them.

“When the ball’s buried,” I told him, “the mama beetle eats

The King's Emeralds

a hole in it and lays eggs in the hole. When the eggs hatch the babies eat the ball."

"Thees babies liking that food?"

"Sure! They love it."

"Such a eating!" George said.

One day when stinging gnats were annoying, George said to them reproachfully:

"Favour and kind I do to letting you eating me. Why you biting me to hurting?"

Of the wars between the black ants and the red ants, George remarked:

"Such a crazy ants and peoples. Killing papas and papas and papas not having the same colours. Why red ants killing black ants? Why white peoples killing black peoples? It is full of happy, the world, and ants and peoples making it the tears."

We did the first five hundred miles of the trek at an average speed of eight miles a day. We reached the highlands below Kambove in the middle of May. Nights and early mornings were so cold that our Nyasaland Kaffirs were miserable so I paid them off and sent them home. Shortly thereafter we met two Alala hunters and hired them as ox drivers and camp boys. They were brothers, with names so difficult for George to pronounce that he began calling them Long-One and Thick-One. Long-One was the elder, quick to smile and to let Thick-One do the harder jobs. Thick-One didn't seem to mind. Both were excellent trackers. They carried *knobkerries* and six-foot spears with eighteen-inch blades.

Although the rains had ended, each morning clouds hung low until almost noon. The first half of each day was depressing with penetrating cold. When the sun came out, however, its warmth quickly drove the chill from our bones. Winter floods had left deep slime in many places and the oxen had hard going.

African Adventures

To add to discomfort, pools and waterholes were alive with tiny worms, the larvæ of flies.

We crossed into Portuguese territory the afternoon of July 17, and made camp in a brush-ringed glade that was as neat and trim as a German park.

Next morning George strolled towards the bush while the boys were cooking breakfast. He came back muttering angrily and said:

“I walking into a bush and flies biting me like hell. I doing such a slapping and a jumping, but these flies eating me like a stabbing.”

“Tsetse,” I said, and called Long-One. “Let the oxen graze in a bunch today,” I said, “we’re going to need the manure.”

Long-One wrinkled his nose and said: “Ow!”

“Cheechee flies?” George yelped. “But, I am bite!”

“Itchy,” I said.

George refused supper that night, explaining that he was “having a bunching in the middle of him.” I assumed he had a touch of indigestion, suggested a drink of hot, salted water, but he shook his head and sat leaning back against the wagon wheel.

After Thick-One had been set to herding the oxen so their manure wouldn’t be too scattered next morning, I rolled up in my blanket and fell asleep. I wakened about midnight because George was walking round the wagon, mumbling:

“No shutting the eyes of you, George Vossos. No having the sleep.”

I thought: *The poor lug has a belly-ache*, and fell asleep again. I wakened about two in the morning. George was still plodding round the wagon.

“Stir up the fire, heat some water and drink it hot. That’ll fix your stomach-ache.”

Wearily, George said:

The King's Emeralds

"The eyes of me are shutting and shutting. In the middle of me I am afraid."

"Pain?"

"No having a pains. I having the sleep sick."

"The what?"

"Those *cheechee* biting of me."

"For Pete's sake, George," I said, "are you trying to say you've got sleeping sickness?"

"I am sad to saying."

"Look, George. The tsetse flies in this area can't infect a man. Cattle, yes. The flies pick up the bug from the game and pass it on to the oxen. But before a tsetse can infect a man it must bite a man who has the sickness. There are no humans living in this particular area, therefore there can be no men with sleeping sickness. Therefore, the fly can't infect men."

"But I walking and walking and the sleeping is in the eyes and in the all of me."

"Listen, George. Every night shortly after sundown you roll in and sleep like a log, so why shouldn't you be sleepy? Stop this nonsense and get some rest. Sleep late in the morning if you like. We'll stay out-spanned tomorrow so we can accumulate enough manure to rub the oxen with it before we push through the tsetse area."

"Manure is being a medicine for *cheechee*?"

"Tsetse won't come near fresh manure," I said.

"I am now having a happy inside of me a little. Tomorrow I rubbing manures on the skin of me." He reached for his blanket.

"Okay," I grinned. "Now tuck yourself in, George, and go to sleep. You know, sleeping sickness doesn't make you sleepy, it makes you weak—dries up the blood. Anyway, it's days after being bitten before you have any . . ."

But George was already snoring.

It was noon next day before we'd got the last of the oxen

African Adventures

well-rubbed with manure. We skirted the tsetse area, but occasionally a fly swarmed out of the bushes, settled on a manure-plastered ox momentarily, then buzzed off in disgust. When George saw that the boys and I did not resist the flies biting us, he lost his fear.

We crossed the Zambezi four days later and out-spanned in a triangular flat at a juncture of the river and a rush-bordered creek. This was familiar territory and I loved every square foot of it. The creek was abundant with fish, skeeter bugs, water spiders and small crocodiles. Islands of lily pads floated close to the reeds. A one-hundred-foot wide strip of the flat back of the rushes was carpeted with tiny, bright-yellow flowers. Scattered trees and bushes broke the clearing into fascinating vistas. At the far end where green grass met dark brush, a long, low ridge of broken rocks lay bare. At the base of the ridge, no grass grew.

Although there seemed to be plenty of water in the ground, the surface of the rock ridge was hot and dry. One evening it rained. Not much, but enough to dampen and cool. The rain stopped about nine o'clock and a bright, full moon rose swiftly above the trees. The moonlight was so intense that George read old letters by its light. Finally he rose, said he was going for a walk and ambled towards the ridge of rocks. A few minutes later his startled yell hushed the night noises.

I grabbed my rifle and ran towards him. He stood at the edge of the bare strip at the base of the rocks. In the white moonlight, highlights of his face seemed luminous.

He pointed to the grassless strip beside the ridge. It was heaving, shifting, spreading and contracting as hundreds of scorpions, claws outstretched, tails straight up, danced weirdly.

"They hide in holes while it's dry," I said. "The rain brought them out."

"My God! They holding the hands of them and dancing!"

The King's Emeralds

“They’re about to mate.”

“Mate?”

“Yes. About to get married.”

“You meaning they making it the babies?”

“Well, right now the papas are getting the mamas hot and bothered.”

“My, my,” George said, “such a crazy!”

“Scorpions, George,” I said, “are even meaner than crocodiles. Each lives alone. When they meet, they usually battle to the death. The winner eats the loser.”

“But they now being happy together.”

“It won’t last. Watch.”

These scorpions were about six inches long, and of a particularly poisonous species. The males were more slender than the females, with longer tails. We concentrated on a pair close to our feet. The female seemed unwilling, so the male lifted his tail with its nasty sting at the tip and did a jerky dance before her. She raised and lowered her eight legs one by one. He held out a claw. She reached for it with hers, drew back, reached again, put her claw in his and joined in the dance. For a time their tails swayed above their bodies, then met and locked just below the stings.

George said: “They stabbing every one to death with the tails of them.”

“No, they’re mating now,” I said.

“You meaning thees being the way thees . . . ?”

“Yes.”

“By the tails of them?”

“Yes.”

“Such a crazy!”

“Watch, George,” I said.

The females, still clutching the males by their claws, began backing and sidling towards the rocks. When a male resisted,

African Adventures

the female tugged gently. Slowly but surely the males were coaxed into holes and crevices.

“They still liking each the other,” George said.

“In a few minutes, George, every female will kill her husband and eat him. Tomorrow I’ll show you what happens to male scorpions after their weddings.”

At dawn we returned to the scene of the love festival. Hundreds of scorpion shells, the big dead claws looking grotesquely large, lay at the base of the rocks. George turned one over with a stick and said:

“He is empty the shell of him. How the mama getting the meat?”

I picked up a carapace and showed George the base of the claws near the mouth opening. “See those little pinchers there? The female bites and tears with them. She wounds the male, chews round the wound and shoves front feet inside him. Her legs contain digestive fluids that turn her husband’s meat to liquid. When his insides are nice and fluid, she puts her mouth over the wound and *pumps* with her throat. When the shell is empty, she drags it to the opening of her cave and pushes it outside.”

George looked dejected. I said:

“Don’t take it so hard, George. That’s the way scorpions are. The husbands don’t seem to mind.”

“I used to thinking bugs being kind. Now I seeing bugs being hurting in the heart of them like peoples. Do thees bugs killing me when they biting me with the tails of them?”

“The venom of this kind of scorpion is about like that of the cobra. But don’t worry, George, we’ve anti-scorpion serum in the first-aid kit.”

“Now she having the babies, the wife?”

“The eggs hatch inside her. The babies are born alive—about one hundred at a time. Soon as they’re born they crawl up on

The King's Emeralds

the mama's back and stay there until they moult. The mama carries so many babies that all you can see of her is her tail and claws."

"What is the moult?"

"Shed their shells—like snakes shed their skins. The babies don't eat for weeks because their insides are packed with egg yolk. Scorpions don't eat often—these mamas probably won't eat again for more than a year. And if they can't eat another scorpion, they'll eat insects. I've seen . . ."

A shrill, choking yell rose from the brush. I turned towards the sound, flipped back the bolt of my rifle and stood waiting. Long-One and Thick-One came running, their *assagais* flashing in the morning sun. Long-One said:

"A man is hurt."

"Might be a leopard," I said, but I knew it wasn't.

We moved towards the trees, but before we'd taken many steps the bushes parted and a naked, brown-skinned native shuffled stiff-legged into the open. He moved with head down, hands grasping something in front of him. Behind him stuck out what looked like a tufted tail. It was an arrow. Its head stuck through the man's belly and he was holding it with his hands.

I had my arms round him as his legs buckled and I put him on the ground on his side. In a mixture of Luchazi and Portuguese, he said:

"I am Pepeca. I have come."

Long-One touched me and pointed to the brush. I nodded and he and Thick-One bounded into the trees to look for the killer. George said:

"Better we pulling out the arrow."

"No. He's dying. Run to the wagon and get the morphine pills from the first-aid kit, George. Hurry."

Pepeca shook with spasms. I waited for them to pass, then asked:

African Adventures

“Who shot you, Pepeca?”

He gasped: “They have broken the fingers of *Senhor Coelho*, but he will not tell them about the buttons. Therefore, they will break more fingers and he will die.”

“Who are they?”

“I was tied with a rope, but I loosed myself and ran away. I ran in the dark. Then the sun came and I smelled your fire. I came, but one, Hohe, who followed me, killed me with his arrow.”

The rest of his words were lost in a gurgle. George handed me the morphine. I placed a pill between Pepeca’s purple lips and gave him a mouthful of water from my canteen. He relaxed, smiled briefly and fell asleep.

He never wakened.

I broke the arrow off close and pulled it from his body. Then George helped me carry him to camp, lay him on the wagon bed and roll him in a blanket.

“We’ll have to bury him right away,” I said to George. “The sun’s getting hot.”

George said: “Ants and scorpions and peoples! Killing, killing, killing. What we doing now?”

“When Long-One and Thick-One get back we’ll send them to the *chef do posto* at Cangamba. He’ll send police.”

“But they is keeping break the fingers of *Senhor Coelho*!”

“Yeah,” I said. “Sounds like white men. That arrow was made by an Ambuella. I know the Ambuellas well and I can’t imagine them breaking fingers.”

Long-One loped into the clearing. He said:

“Spoor. Three white men. Six, maybe seven black men. Two days ago, maybe, they go to the river.” He pointed south-west towards the Cuando. “Thick-One follow spoor. I come to tell. Thick-One come back maybe one day.”

“Go fill your belly with mush,” I said. “Then take my letter

The King's Emeralds

to the *chef do posto* at Cangamba. If he's not there, give the letter to the magistrate. You come back quick."

Cangamba was almost one hundred miles south-west, but Long-One was back in six days with the *chef do posto*, a sad-looking, fever-ridden man named Bernardino Silva.

Meanwhile, Thick-One had shown up with news that the natives of the party he'd been trailing were indeed Ambuellas. He'd followed them to a branch of the Cuando, watched them embark in canoes and land on an island in the river.

"Two white men are Arabs," he'd said, and spat.

"The third white man?"

"He is sick. Sometimes he falls down."

Silva had four Bihe policemen with him. "I am glad you are here, *Senhor*," he said to me as George stood by listening. "I was in the hospital when your tracker arrived. My feet are in great pain for I have a severe infection between my toes from sand fleas. I must ask you in the name of the Presidente of Portugal, to assist me in the capture of the black-bearded Aliche Fazai and his partner, the one-eyed one, Achmed Rashid. If it be God's will we will also rescue the coat with the buttons and we may even rescue that poor man, *Senhor Jose d'Andrade Hermenigildo Coelho*."

"But first being the buttons?" George asked sarcastically.

"But, certainly, the buttons. You have buried Pepeca?"

"Yes," I said.

"The buttons . . ." Silva continued.

"Never mind the buttons," I said. "How about Coelho? Who is he? Why is Fazai breaking his fingers?"

"*Senhor Jose d'Andrade* . . ."

"Coelho," I said.

"Yes. *Senhor Coelho* is the special messenger of Presidente Teixeira Gomes, who is the Presidente of Portugal and . . ."

"I know."

African Adventures

“For *Senhor Coelho*’s rescue you will be paid well. For the rescue of the buttons you will be rewarded magnificently. I must trust you. Within the buttons, which are round and of brass, are hidden the three emeralds of King John II.” Silva looked as if he expected me to gape. I said:

“What’s so special about the King John emeralds?”

“My God!” Silva said. “You do not know?”

“I do not know.”

“Know, then, that King John’s emeralds are worth great sums. They were purchased by Dom Vasco da Gama in 1497 from an Arab in Milindi. Dom Vasco took the emeralds with him to Calicut when he discovered India. Mohammedan traders turned the Indian zamorin against Dom Vasco, raided his post and stole the emeralds. Many years later a captain of a Portuguese slave ship found them on a slave who said he had taken them from an Arab he had killed in French Dahomey. That captain died of fever and the emeralds disappeared. In 1888 they were found in the possession of a native chief in south-east Angola by Major Serpa Pinto. Pinto sent them under guard to King Luiz I. En route, they were stolen. Only recently the emeralds were found on an Arab in the Province of Moxico. They were taken from the Arab because they rightfully belong to Portugal. *Senhor Jose d’Andrade Herm . . .*”

“Coelho,” I said.

“Yes. He was sent from Lisbon to conduct the emeralds safely. He brought with him a coat with brass buttons, three of which were prepared so that the emeralds could be placed within them. The emeralds are now within those buttons and . . .”

“Well, Silva, I’ll try to help you get Coelho. The emeralds are something else again.”

“But you do not understand, *Senhor*. The emeralds are beyond price. They were engraved in Crete five hundred years

The King's Emeralds

before Christ was born. They were engraved by the greatest . . ." Silva stopped for a moment to glare at George, who'd grunted scornfully. ". . . the greatest artist of the world," he continued. "His name was Epimenes and on one emerald he engraved the head of a horse. On another, the head of a lion. On the third, two warriors, fighting. The emeralds are flat and are the size of the thumbnail."

"Well, if we get Coelho, he'll probably be wearing the coat. One of my trackers says that Fazai has holed up in the *kraal* of an old friend of mine—an Ambuella chief named Kaputo. I'll go with you, but I can't just take off in a cloud of dust. I'm working for George, here. He'll have to give me some days off."

"This Kaputo," Silva said. "It may be we will have to kill him as well as Fazai."

"I'm not killing anybody, Silva," I said. "How about it, George? Will you give me a few days off to go get Coelho?"

George said: "Talking, talking, talking. No one is feel sad for Pepeca. Such a bastards. I am burn in the insides of me. Why you no being sad for Pepeca?" He clenched a fist and patted the knuckles: "That Fazai!" he said. "I finding and punching him with all my hands. We starting now. Yes?"

"Not until morning," I said. But by morning, one of Silva's toes was so badly infected that I had to amputate it. He couldn't go with us, which was just as well. He'd probably complicate things, and I figured that, without him, I'd have little trouble getting Kaputo to back me up when I demanded Coelho from the Arabs. Coelho was all I cared about. Fazai and his partner could go their way. After all, I wasn't a cop.

George, Long-One, Thick-One and I took off the next morning. We left the four Bihe policemen to care for Silva. Bihes hate Ambuellas—they'd have pushed Kaputo's people around.

We travelled light. I had my Lee-Enfield and twenty cartridges. George left his rifle in camp "because I no shooting

African Adventures

peoples". The Kaffirs carried stabbing spears and *knobkerries*. At the last minute Silva had given me a letter of authority to act for him and I'd tucked it into a back pants pocket.

The going was fine the first two days. We passed through bits of forest and across wide park-like clearings. We forded numerous small, clear streams. Antelope and hares were so plentiful and so easy to approach that Long-One, with his spear, had no trouble bagging all we needed to eat. The third day as we approached the Cuando, we encountered marsh so spongy that, what with falling down and getting up, we were soon covered with mud from ears to ankles. We cut back to higher land, skirted the sloughs and, on the fourth day, hit the branch of the river on which Kaputo's *kraal* was built. We struggled through bog and got involved in a belt of reeds that slowed our advance to less than a mile an hour. We were bedraggled and pooped when we finally came out on a sand-and-mud flat on the river's edge and saw Kaputo's island squatting in the afternoon sun.

Several dug-out canoes were moored to the bank. We took one and poled it through shallow water into the main stream. Hippos sported among the lily pads. Birds of all sizes and colours swooped screaming above us. The swift current caught us, whirled us about like a cork, then shot us into still water. Watched by about forty Ambuellas, we drew up to the island.

In the past, these people had smiled or laughed a welcome when they met me. Now they greeted us in sullen silence. I spotted Kaputo, stepped ashore and held out my thumb to be shaken. He said:

"When I saw you come I ordered a hut prepared for you. Do you come in peace?"

"Sure," I said.

"It is good. A fire is lighted at your hut. Eggs and a chicken are laid by the door. Follow me."

The King's Emeralds

His people, faces blank, opened a passage for us. We followed Kaputo to a dome-shaped, thatched hut on the opposite side of the island. On packed earth before the low opening that served as a door, a fire burned in a five-gallon paraffin tin that had been converted into a stove. Atop the tin a cast-iron pot steamed listlessly. A plucked hen, covered with black ants, lay on the ground. Six eggs, dirty with manure, lay beside the fowl. I said:

“Are we pigs that you give us filthy food?”

Kaputo said: “Tomorrow you go.”

“Are you no longer my friend, then?”

For a moment I thought Kaputo was going to weep. His face worked as if restraining tears. He stepped close and said through nauseating breath:

“Why you come?”

“To take the sick white man back with us.”

“No white man here.”

“Don’t lie, Kaputo.”

“No white man here. Better you go.” He looked over his shoulder nervously. “Better you go,” he said again, and left.

George followed me into the hut. The interior was gloomy, and it stank. Lizards scurried over the walls. A string of ants marched across the mud-and-dung floor. I drew my skinning knife and cut a square window in the wall opposite the entrance. Light streamed in, and a different stink. I looked out and saw an old, male ostrich scratching for grubs in a big manure pile. I said:

“George, Kaputo is terrified. Probably by Fazai. Could be that we’re in for trouble.” I leaned my rifle against the wall, hung my bandolier on it and went outside to look around. There were twenty huts in the village. Kaputo’s, I remembered, was the large one in the centre.

“I’m going to visit Kaputo, George,” I said. “You wait here.”

African Adventures

As I walked towards Kaputo's hut, natives retreated before me in brooding silence. Kaputo was not in. He wasn't on the river bank. No one would answer my questions. I returned to our hut.

At the back of the hut stood George, feeding the ostrich. Long-One and Thick-One were gone. I went inside the hut.

My rifle and ammunition were gone.

I stuck my head through the window and asked George if he'd taken them.

"No," George said. "You leaving it, the rifle in . . . ?"

"I know. Who's been here, George?"

"One black mans. He coming behind here and saying where is you. I saying you walking. He going away."

"Did he come in the hut?"

"I not knowing. You thinking he stealing the rifle?"

"I'm damn' sure of it," I said, and sat down to think.

Nicobar Jones used to say: "When you're in a jam, dig into your brains."

Loss of the rifle worried me. I was pretty sure that Fazai, lying doggo in one of the huts, had ordered it to be stolen. And I was pretty sure that he'd ordered Kaputo to horse us out of the village next morning. Everything pointed to a fight coming up. I didn't want a fight.

Dusk fell and I still sat. I heard Long-One and Thick-One arguing about who should cook the chicken. I heard George asking them to hurry supper. Still I sat, unable to decide on a plan.

I remembered Jones telling me once that, whenever I didn't know what to do, to go ahead and do something, anyway.

It was dark by the time I decided to have one more talk with Kaputo. I got up and went out just as six spear-armed natives squatted on their haunches at the edge of our firelight. I said:

"What do you want?"

The King's Emeralds

None answered. They just sat, whites of their eyes gleaming. I said:

“Get the hell out of here.”

One made a threatening gesture with his spear. Long-One picked up a burning brand. I said:

“No fighting, Long-One. George, keep our boys here. I'll be back.”

I went into the hut, climbed through the window I'd cut, slipped into shadow of the next hut, then inched my way through darkness to the centre of the village. It was soon evident that the village was deserted. I went to the river. All canoes were gone. I cut back through the village, thought I saw a glimmer of light in one hut, went down on my belly and wriggled close to the hut's wall. I heard a low moan.

I moved part-way round the hut, paused and listened. Again I heard a moan. Slowly and carefully I crawled near the entrance. Something white filled it. At first I thought it a curtain, but as my eyes adjusted, I saw it was the skirt of a white *chamma*, and that the man who wore it was bending over, his back to me.

I heard the moan more clearly. I felt certain that the two Arabs were giving Coelho the works again. I acted fast—perhaps this nightgown-clad guy's position inspired me, but anyway, I knelt close behind him, put the palms of my hands flat together as if in prayer, drew my hands down, and still holding them like a wedge, drove them with all of my strength, upward between the man's buttocks. I scored a bull's eye. He froze—paralysed, hunched as motionless as a statue.

I knew he was in agony. That wedge-like thrust to the most tender part of the body is one of the cruellest blows I know. The victim can't breathe. He can't even yell. The paralysis doesn't last long, but long enough for you to slit his throat, bang his head or tie him up. I did none of these.

African Adventures

Instead, I struck a wax match and set fire to the hem of his robe. Flames shot up his back, caught the grass walls beside the door and in seconds the whole side of the hut was ablaze. The man still stood hunched, but was suddenly knocked backwards as another Arab, screaming, came into the open.

I went into the hut, grabbed a white man under the armpits and dragged him out. It was Coelho.

For one brief moment I saw a dancing, yelping figure tearing off blazing clothes and throw them right and left. Then the second Arab, knife in hand, jumped at me. I ducked the knife and drove my heel into his instep. As he hopped on one foot I clipped him hard on the side of his neck with the edge of my hand. He tipped towards me. I grabbed him by the beard, jerked his chin up and socked him on the Adam's apple—again with the side of my hand. Then I let him drop.

I picked up the Arab's knife and threw it into the burning hut just as the roof caught fire with a roar, blazed high and sent flames against the next hut. The guy whose clothes I'd set afire was stark naked now and still yowling. He was clean-shaven so I knew he was Achmed.

I bent to drag Coelho clear of the heat and he jabbered something to me in Portuguese. His feet were tied. I cut the thongs, slung him across my shoulders and trotted with him towards our hut.

When I got within about fifty feet I saw that George, Long-One and Thick-One were in a close huddle, the six Ambuellas holding them there at spear points. I lay Coelho on the ground, jerked a centre pole from the nearest hut and rushed the warriors.

Most African natives can take it on the head, but bang their leg bones and they fold. I swung the pole hard against a black, bangled ankle. The fellow's yell of pain coincided with a new flare of light as yet another hut caught fire. I belted the next

The King's Emeralds

warrior across the shins. He dropped his spear, doubled up and rolled on the ground beside the lad with the busted ankle.

The other four Ambuellas turned towards me, and George, Long-One and Thick-One hit them in a bunch. It seemed a grotesque dance I watched as the seven mixed it up. Then a rifle cracked and a bullet ricocheted into the outer side of my right thigh. I went down, got to my knees and crawled to Coelho. With my knife I cut all buttons from his coat, then dragged myself back and into the hut with the idea of hiding them.

Shrill shrieks took me to the entrance. In the light of leaping flames I saw the two Arabs running towards the *mélée*. Fazai's white robe was tucked up round his waist. He carried a rifle. Achmed, still naked, waved a long, curved knife.

Inside my pants-leg, blood was pumping. I felt no pain, but was growing dizzy. I started to rip the leg of my trousers with my knife. I glanced out and saw the ostrich hopping around, bewildered by noises and flames. I rolled the brass buttons in front of him. Their shiny surfaces twinkled like stars in the light of the growing holocaust. True to his instincts, the old ostrich gobbled the buttons down his long throat.

I tried to get to my feet, wobbled and sat down. I saw Long-One and Thick-One go down with spear thrusts. Four of the Ambuellas were dead. Later I learned that one of the four was Hohe.

The two surviving Ambuellas jumped George. There was a brief struggle and one native went flying through the air, landed hard and lay still. The other turned to run, took a round-house right on the side of the jaw, rolled over several times, then he too, lay quiet.

Fazai levelled his rifle at George. I tried to yell a warning, but my voice was only a croak. I crawled out of the hut, but my arms collapsed and my face pushed into the sand. Something

African Adventures

brushed past me. It was the ostrich bouncing around in terror. A spread-winged jump landed him between George and Fazai as the Arab's rifle barked. The ostrich toppled over and lay kicking.

George's yell ripped the night. He rushed Fazai, staggered as the rifle exploded, then grabbed the gun, jerked it from Fazai's hand and jabbed as with a bayonet. Fazai shuffled backwards. George followed and pushed the toe of the butt upwards against Fazai's jaw, then brought the barrel down on top of the Arab's head. I heard the skull crack. Fazai was dead.

George went after Achmed. That poor devil moved so fast that he was six jumps away before George got fairly started. George hurled the rifle. It wrapped round Achmed's legs and he went down in a heap. Instantly, George was on top of him. One punch and Achmed was all through. Four months later, he was hanged.

I blacked out. When I came to, George had bandaged my thigh and was working on Long-One and Thick-One. Both were in bad shape.

"Did you bring in Coelho, George?" I asked.

George grinned. "I bringing him in the hut. He is paining, but only in his fingers."

One by one all the huts caught fire, but ours was the last to go. George helped us to the river and made us comfortable on the sand. Kaputo and his followers turned up towards dawn and took over our care. When certain that Fazai was dead, Kaputo was so happy that he started to cry. It was one of the few times I've seen a native in tears.

I slept until afternoon and, when I wakened, was told that men had been sent to get Silva and that Long-One and Thick-One would live. I said to George:

"*You* were putting up a good battle all along, George, but suddenly you seemed to go nuts. What happened?"



Above: A Miki Carter picture of a charging rhino.

Below: Skinners cutting zebra steaks, said to be the world's tastiest meat.



Love is the same the world over. A young Barabbaig bride here says a mournful farewell to her husband, who is leaving to act as trapper on a photographic expedition.

The King's Emeralds

"I get burning up on the insides of me."

"Yeah. But why?"

"Because that man shooting the ostrich. That ostrich being liking me."

I said: "You look peaked, George. You sick?"

"Not the sick. A bullet shooting me at the side but not going inside of me. No making me the sick. Only hurting. Kaputo fixing just now."

"You're quite a guy, George, in case you don't know it," I said.

"What saying?"

"Never mind," I said.

Eight days later, Silva arrived on a litter. By that time Kaputa's people had almost rebuilt their village; the ostrich's crop had been opened and the brass buttons sewed again on Ccelho's coat. Long-One and Thick-One were having the time of their lives being waited on by big-bottomed women. My wound was healing with no sign of infection and I'd begun to get around on improvised crutches.

George seemed to have no regrets for having killed Fazai. I asked him why. He said:

"He is being dead the Arab. I no feeling bad. I seeing the papa scorpions being dead and I feeling sad a little, but not for him, the Arab. Maybe I can't explaining, but . . ."

"I understand," I said.

A few days after his arrival, Silva held a hearing for Kaputo, who said that Fazai had terrified him by threatening to inform authorities that he'd sold some children into slavery several months before. "They were girl children," the chief said, "and they went to become wives for sultans in Saudi Arabia."

"You were paid a 'dowry'?" Silva asked.

"It is so."

African Adventures

"And the girls were told that if questioned by authorities en route they were to say that they went willingly?"

"That also is true."

Silva shrugged. He said to me: "The League of Nations has done much to suppress slave trade, but when victims announce that they go with the slavers of their own will, as 'wives', or as 'legally adopted children', there is nothing that officials can do. The slave blocks of Saudi Arabia are still much in use."

George said: "I have seen many slaves in Saudi Arabia. They are being happy. They are being better as here maybe."

"True," Silva agreed "Slaves are not always badly treated these days, but the ugly, black girls who think they will be wives, have been lied to. Harem of sultans are filled with beautiful girls, many with white skins. Kaputo has done wrong and he knows it. He must go with me to the magistrate. He will be fined to the amount of the 'dowries'."

Silva then ordered Coelho to open the buttons so that he might report that the emeralds had actually been recovered. Coelho's fingers were in splints, so Silva, himself, opened the buttons. George and I watched intently as the *chef do posto* separated the two halves of the first button, exposing a small wad of cotton wool. His fingers trembled as he picked the cotton part.

No emerald.

Coelho gasped. Silva seemed stunned. George said:

"He is going away, the emerald!"

Silva hastily opened the other buttons. Two contained wads of cotton wool. No emeralds.

Coelho burst into tears. In Silva's cheek, muscles twitched, and he stared at me strangely. I looked at George. George said: "Such a crazy!"

A WITCH-DOCTOR'S MAGIC

WE WERE SITTING ON the ground in front of one of the new huts—a perplexed and frustrated group as we watched Silva handling the empty half-shells of the buttons. It was as if he were playing some melancholy game. Coelho's sobbing had stopped, but tears still trickled down his black beard. George had picked up one of the wads of cotton wool and was tearing it into tiny tufts. Kaputo, when able to understand about the loss of the emeralds, mumbled:

“Ow!” and made tongue noises like corks being drawn.

Silva said to me: “You are the only one, *Senhor*, who had possession of the buttons except *Senhor Coelho*.”

“You forget the ostrich,” I grinned.

“It is no matter for joking, *Senhor*. You perhaps would not have opened the buttons and taken the emeralds, but the magistrate and the officials do not know that. You must come with me to Cangamba. There we will tell the story to the magistrate.”

“You’re dreaming, Silva,” I said, and took one of the half-buttons from his hand. It seemed part of an ordinary brass button such as worn on many military tunics except that the halves screwed together with small-gauge spiral thread. On the last turn of the thread a small spring-barb slipped into an indentation in the other half of the shell, locking the halves together. The halves could be unthreaded when pressure on top

African Adventures

of the button cleared the spring-barb. It was a clever little gadget. I handed the button-shell back. Silva said:

“The magistrate will ask why, in the midst of battle, you cut the buttons from *Senhor Coelho*’s coat.”

“Now, Silva,” I said, “don’t make me peeved. Why weren’t such valuable gems put under heavy guard? Why was Coelho prowling through the back-country with emeralds hidden in brass buttons—like a cloak-and-dagger character?”

“You do not understand, *Senhor*,” Silva said. “For a guard we had only native policemen. They would have been at the mercy of Fazai had he attacked. *Senhor Coelho* has long been the trusted messenger of the Government.”

I turned to Coelho. “Did you, yourself, Coelho, put the emeralds in the buttons?”

“I myself watched as they were put in the buttons,” Coelho said.

“And from then on they never left your possession until I cut them from your coat?”

“Not for even one moment,” he said. He put his bandaged hands over his face and blubbered.

“For Pete’s sake, Coelho! Stop weeping,” I said, and struggled up on my crutches.

“It’s a mess,” I said, “and I’m through with it. And I’m certainly not going to Cangamba, Silva.”

Silva got to his feet, looked at his two Bihe policemen, glanced speculatively at Kaputo, shrugged, and said:

“We shall see, *Senhor*.”

I hobbled to my hut.

That afternoon the two Bihes started for Cangamba leading Achmed by a röpe round his neck. I felt sure they’d return with reinforcements.

Coelho had crying spells all day. Towards evening I began to suspect that he was delirious. I took a medical thermometer to

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

his hut, pushed his protesting hands aside and put the thermometer in his mouth. His temperature was 104. I called Silva.

"This man's sick," I said, "very sick." Leaning on my crutches, I watched Silva strip Coelho bare. Coelho was literally skin-and-bones. I called George and sent him for Kaputo, and when the chief arrived I asked for meat—lots of it—any kind of meat. Twenty minutes later a couple of women arrived with two plucked chickens, a skinned ground-squirrel and a three-foot snake.

I told them to take the insides out of the chickens—Ambuellas eat chicken, entrails and all. I cleaned the ground-squirrel, skinned, cleaned and cut the snake into three-inch pieces, and dropped squirrel and snake into a pot of water. The women pulled the chickens to pieces and dropped them in with the snake and squirrel. I motioned the women to keep the fire going and went back to Coelho. He was shaking with chill. I said:

"It's a long time since you've eaten, Coelho. Didn't Fazai and Achmed feed you?"

"Only water, *Senhor*."

"Well, I'm cooking broth. I want you to drink it until you think you'll pop."

"I am not hungry, *Senhor*. But my bones are sore. I wish to die."

"Don't be an ass," I said. "Eat, and get well."

Coelho sat up with a jerk, gasped and fell back panting. A louse crawled from his beard, walked out on his chest, turned and scurried back into the whiskers.

George brought me the first-aid kit, I got scissors from it and began cutting Coelho's beard close to the skin. He tossed, turned and cursed in Portuguese. One of the women came in with a half-gourd filled with broth. George sat on the ground beside Coelho, lifted his shoulders and held him against his chest.

African Adventures

I placed the gourd to Coelho's lips. He turned away his face. I said:

"Drink, Coelho."

He sipped rebelliously at first, then eagerly—gulpingly. I tipped the gourd until he got the last drop.

"More, please," he said, and immediately fell asleep. He slept like a dead man, not even wincing as I shaved him with an old-fashioned razor. His shock of black hair was speckled with nits. I shaved his head, too. Then I had George gather blankets, and we piled them on our patient. We sat beside him and when it grew dark, George lighted a candle-stub. And Coelho still slept.

George finally went to his hut and I had the women bring the broth and meat into Coelho's hut, then told them to go home.

About three in the morning, Coelho opened his eyes. I held a chicken leg to his mouth and he chewed it clean. Then I pushed bits of white snake-meat between his lips. He ate all of the snake. I filled the gourd with broth. He gulped several mouthfuls, then fell asleep again. The candle flickered, and the wick drowned in melted wax. I lit another candle, looked at Coelho and noticed he was sweating. I tucked the blankets round him securely, stretched myself out on the floor and slept without dreams.

A pencil of sunlight streaming through a hole in the thatch wandered across my face early next morning and wakened me. I looked at Coelho and chuckled aloud. His shaven head was knobby; his face, sickly-white where the beard had been, was thin and lantern-jawed; his nose—a long, brown, narrow wedge against the white skin, reminded me of a picture I'd once seen of *Pinocchio*. Coelho's ears were brown, and against his shaven pate, looked like leather flaps. His eyes were brown, large and sad. I said:

A Witch-Doctor's Magic .

"Excuse me for laughing, Coelho, but you look so damned funny."

"I am hungry, *Senhor*," he said, "and my broken fingers feel like sticks."

"First, your temperature," I said. "And keep the thermometer under your tongue."

I looked at the reading. "Back to normal, Coelho," I said.

"You fed me, *Senhor*. The doctors never feed me when I have the fever attacks."

"Well, long ago," I said, "I learned to feed a fever. Want your meat cold, or warm?"

"Cold," he said, and wouldn't let me feed him. He grabbed squirrel and chicken chunks awkwardly with his bandaged hands and began wolfing. Silva came in and said to me:

"There's a witch-doctor at Kaputo's hut, *Senhor*. He wants to talk to you." Then he noticed the mess Coelho was making of his bandages, called him a pig, and left. Coelho finished the last scrap of meat and promptly slept again. And while he slept, I re-bandaged his hands. The broken fingers seemed to be coming along fine, so I left off the splints.

In front of Kaputo's hut, the witch-doctor squatted on his haunches. On his head he wore a large pompom of chicken feathers. He smiled a jagged-tooth greeting, held up his hand palm outward and said:

"You were a boy. Now you are a man."

"Batu!" I said. "You old goat! How are you?" and held out my thumb. Batu shook it heartily.

"I have come," he said.

"But, Batu, you're a Mucassequere," I said. "You've always hated Ambuellas. Why are you here?"

"Kaputo."

"Kaputo?"

"He send."

African Adventures

“Kaputo sent for you to come here?”

“Ai.”

“Why?”

“To make magic to find thief.”

I shouted for Kaputo and he came from his hut, wiping his mouth with the heel of his hand. I pointed to Batu. Kaputo said:

“The emeralds were lost because I was in fear of the Arab. Batu will find the thief.”

I said: “One time Batu took me into his cave, made the smoke and cast the bones. In the smoke I visioned an elephant charging me with trunk curled back. Two weeks later when many miles from Batu’s village, that very elephant charged me, his trunk curled back.”

Batu said: “I have come. Now I go.” He picked up some pebbles, placed them in a row and said: “That day you come, and I make the smoke.”

“Sixteen pebbles,” I said. “You want us to come to your cave in sixteen days. Right?”

Batu picked up the pebbles, then tossed them at my feet. “That many suns, you come,” he said. He spat on my boot, got up and stalked from the village.

“Kaputo,” I said, “when did you become friendly with the Mucassequeres? You used to call them dogs, and always beat them when you met them in the forest.”

“It is true that the Mucassequeres are curs. But, in the smoke, Batu sees the future. One of *Senhor Silva*’s Bihes told the woman who slept with him last night that men are coming to carry you to the post at Cangamba. You are my friend. You came, and the Arab is dead. I sent for Batu, who will find the thief. Thus you will remain free.”

“I’m not going to Cangamba, Kaputo,” I said.

“It came to me, O Hunter, that if Batu finds the thief perhaps

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

you would tell *Senhor* Silva that he is not to take me to Cangamba to stand trial before the magistrate for having sold girls to slavers."

"Chief," I said, "the *Senhors* Silva and Coelho will have nothing to do with Batu and his magic. Furthermore, you sold those girls knowing it was against the law."

"You are not my friend, then?"

"Yes, Kaputo, I am your friend. I am your father. But slavery . . ."

I heard Coelho yelling and raced to his hut. One of the women who'd prepared the chickens for last night's broth was trying to get under the blankets with him. I pushed her out of the hut, tucked the blankets round Coelho again and said:

"There's a Mucassequere witch-doctor, Batu, who thinks he can make magic and find out who stole the emeralds."

Coelho pushed the blankets off, sat up and said excitedly:

"If this is true, I am no longer a ruined man." He got to his feet, skinny shanks trembling. I put him down, covered him again and said:

"You want the witch doctor to make the smoke? You believe in magic, Coelho?"

"Of the utmost certainty, *Senhor*."

"Well, Batu won't do anything for sixteen days. He's waiting for the full moon, I think. Stay warm, and eat all the meat you can."

Days passed. My leg grew stronger. One morning I visited Long-One and Thick-One, examined their wounds and said:

"You fellows are well enough to be up and about. I'll tell the women they don't have to nurse you any longer."

Long-One said: "Do not tell this to the women, O My Father, for the nights are cold, and because we are sick, the women come in the darkness and being full of fat, they warm our bones beneath the blankets. Hunters must always in time

African Adventures

return home for the unmarried women of the kraals have need of being filled with babies. The need of these Ambuella women is greater than the need of the women of the Alala, O My Father. Therefore, my brother and I will become Ambuellas. Here we will remain."

"Remain peacefully, then," I said, "but name me two of Kaputo's men to replace you."

"Moera and Cahinga," Thick-One said.

Moera and Cahinga were in their thirties, very black, and scarred from fighting. Kaputo gave me permission to hire them and they left that afternoon to take charge of our camp and relieve the Bihes. After they'd gone, Silva called me to his hut.

"I have heard, *Senhor*," he said, "that *Senhor* Coelho would consult that Mucassequere sorcerer regarding the emeralds."

"He seems to have faith in magic."

"That Batu is a law-breaker and a trouble-maker."

"I know Batu's an old rascal," I said, "but it could be he *just* might be able to give Coelho a clue to the thief."

Silva's eyes flashed. He said: "Let it be understood, *Senhor*, neither *Senhor* Coelho nor yourself will consult the witch-doctor."

"I'll tell Coelho," I said

I went to Coelho's hut, took his temperature, propped him up comfortably and said:

"Coelho, when did you first hear about the emeralds?"

"I was in Lisbon, *Senhor*, and . . ."

"When?"

"Four months ago."

"What were you told?"

"I was ordered to leave at once for Cangamba, and there receive the emeralds from the *chef do posto*."

"From Silva?"

"Si, *Senhor*."

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

“How did he get possession of them?”

“The emeralds were found on an Arab in Moxico who'd been taken as a thief. A second Arab escaped. It must have been that second Arab who informed Fazai about the matter.”

“Did the authorities suggest that you put the emeralds in the buttons?”

“No, *Senhor*. It is my own very clever, secret method.”

“Not so secret, Coelho. Pepeca mentioned the buttons as he was dying.”

“I had told Pepeca. Pepeca was a good man.”

“Who else knew about the buttons?”

“The magistrate at Cangamba, *Senhor*. Also *Senhor Silva*. Also . . .”

“Who put the emeralds inside the buttons?”

“It was I.”

“With your own hands?”

“No. The big sergeant, he who is called Mote, put the emeralds in the buttons at my order. I watched him like an eagle, *Senhor*. He put the emeralds in the buttons as he sat at a table. He screwed the buttons together and immediately put them in my hand.”

“Why did you let Mote do it?”

“This black sergeant, *Senhor*, had the cotton wool on the shelf of the supply room. This cotton wool was rolled in blue paper and on the paper was printed ‘from American Red Cross’. It was for the purpose of the hospital and it was a big roll. May I have water to drink, please, *Senhor*? ”

I handed him the water gourd and asked:

“It was you, Coelho, who sewed the buttons on your coat?”

“Si. But, *Senhor*, I am of the opinion that Fazai stole the emeralds while they were breaking my fingers.”

“Then why did they continue torturing you, Coelho?”

African Adventures

“I do not know, *Senhor*. I was sick with pain and with hunger. And then you came, and . . .”

“Fazai didn’t steal the emeralds, Coelho. Neither did I. I don’t believe the emeralds were ever in the buttons.”

“But, *Senhor*! I myself saw . . .”

“Were you and this sergeant Mote alone when he was supposed to be putting the emeralds in the buttons?”

“Si. We were alone, and *Senhor Silva*, also.”

“*Silva* was there?”

“But certainly, *Senhor*. He handed the emeralds to Mote, who put them in the buttons with the cotton wool and then placed the buttons in my open hand. I held them in one hand while with the other I signed the release for the emeralds.”

“Release?”

“A receipt stating that *Senhor Silva* had delivered the emeralds to me.”

“And then you sewed the buttons on your coat. Where did you do that, Coelho?”

“At Mote’s table. I sewed them on while Mote and *Senhor Silva* watched me. Then I put the coat on and I never took it off—night or day—not even while Fazai and that one-eyed-one broke my fingers.”

“What I can’t understand, Coelho, is why you didn’t send the emeralds to Portugal by post. The government mails. . . .”

“The mails from Cangamba, *Senhor*, are carried by natives. It was thought best for me to take them.”

“Why didn’t you head for Benguela? Why did you travel south?”

“We thought it best that . . .”

“Who is ‘we’?”

“*Senhor Silva* and I. We . . .”

“*Silva*? He advised you to go south?”

“Si, *Senhor*. We thought it best to go to the southern border

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

and thence into British territory. I would then proceed to Walvis Bay and there take passage on a vessel."

"George was right when he said that the whole thing's crazy," I said. "Where did Fazai capture you? How the hell did he know you carried the emeralds?"

"I have explained to you, *Senhor*," Coelho said wearily, "that a second Arab escaped when . . ."

"Yes, I remember. How long were you out of Cangamba when Fazai caught up with you?"

"He and the one-eyed-one, and seven of Kaputo's natives were waiting for me at the first camping place. They beat me with sticks, tied my feet and carried me in the darkness until the sun came. Pepeca, they tied by the hands while we walked, but at night they tied his feet also. Then they broke my finger. Fazai put his thumbs on the joint and the bone cracked with a *nqise* . . ."

"Did Fazai ask about the emeralds, Coelho?"

"He did not speak, *Senhor*. But after they had carried me one more night he grasped another of my fingers and said: 'Where are the emeralds?' I said: 'I know nothing of emeralds.' Then he broke that finger. The pain made everything red before my eyes and I wept, *Senhor*. That night they tied Pepeca again, but that night he escaped."

"Well, Coelho," I said, "Fazai knew you were coming. Someone tipped him off."

"The Arab who escaped . . ."

"He didn't know anything about your proposed route. I wouldn't be surprised if that guy Mote . . ."

"Mote did not know of the way I would go, *Senhor*."

"Mote didn't know?"

"No, *Senhor*."

"Silva and you and Pepeca, then, were the only ones who knew your route?"

African Adventures

“That is true, *Senhor*.”

I said: “Rest for a while, now, Coelho. I’ll be back.”

I went out into the sunlight and limped among the huts. I now felt certain that Silva was behind the theft. But where were the emeralds? They’d probably never even been put in the buttons. Yet, Coelho had seen them put in the buttons. I sat on the ground and pretended that I was Mote and that I intended to hide the emeralds. I went about the business in every possible way. Then I hobbled back to Coelho’s hut and said:

“Let me tell you how Mote put the emeralds in the buttons, Coelho. Don’t interrupt. If I’m right . . .”

“Please, *Senhor*, I am worn out with questions.”

“Listen, Coelho,” I said. “Mote was sitting at a table in the supply room. Right?”

“It is so.”

“And the roll of cotton batting—wool—was on the table at one side of Mote?”

“It was in front of him, *Senhor*.”

“He held half of a button in one hand?”

“No. He held an emerald in one hand.”

“He picked cotton wool from the roll and wrapped it round the emerald?”

“*Si*, *Senhor*. Then he put the emerald in the bottom half of a button and reached for the top half of the button. He then . . .”

“Wait, Coelho. He wrapped cotton wool round the emerald, placed it in the button, but it didn’t fit snugly, so he reached into the roll of cotton wool and got a bit more. Right?”

“I . . . Let me think of that, *Senhor*. *Si*. That is what he did. He wrapped the emerald in insufficient wool each time, so he took more wool from the roll and pushed it into the button so that there would be no movement of the emerald. He

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

then screwed the top on and handed each button to me. I then . . . ”

“I know. Let's go over it again, Coelho. First Mote wrapped a bit of cotton wool about an emerald.”

“Si.”

“But it wasn't enough wool.”

“It is as I told you, *Senhor*.”

“Mote held the partially-wrapped emerald in the hand with which he reached into the roll for more wool?”

“*Senhor*, I—I am not certain. It may have been so.”

“It was so, Coelho,” I said.

“Please, *Senhor*, will you now talk no more? Talk makes nothing.”

“Only one more thing, Coelho, and then I'll let you sleep. What happened to the roll of cotton wool?”

“Nothing happened, *Senhor*. *Senhor* Silva gave me the release to sign. Mote handed me a pen. I dipped the pen in an ink bottle and I signed the release. That is all.”

“But the roll of cotton wool?”

“It was returned to the shelf.”

“By Mote?”

“No. *Senhor* Silva put it back.”

“You're sure of that, Coelho?”

“Si, *Senhor*. I then sewed the buttons on the coat and we left that room. I then called Pepcca, who was to hunt food—for we carried no supplies—and . . . ”

“Well, get some rest now, Coelho,” I said.

Outside the hut I felt in my back pants pocket for the “authority” Silva'd given me when Long-One, Thick-One, George and I had started out to find Coelho. I'd not thought of the paper since. It was there all right, jammed down deep. It was soiled and wrinkled, but when I opened it to read, the written side was clean. It said:

African Adventures

To All whom this may Concern: The bearer is empowered by me to act on my behalf in matters of every nature. His authority is that of my own. (signed): Bernardino Silva.

I went to my hut, sent for George, and as we put fresh dressings on each other's wounds, I said:

"Silva's going to arrest me, George, for stealing the emeralds."

"But you no stealing the emeralds!"

"No, of course not. But I know who did steal them."

"Why Silva thinking you stealing . . . *What saying you?* You knowing it the stealing?"

"I'm pretty certain."

"Then why you no telling Silva so he no putting you in it, the jail?"

"Because it was Silva who stole the emeralds."

"*What saying you?*"

"Silva's the thief. He also set Fazai on Coelho."

"But that cannot being. He being police, Silva. He knowing about them, the buttons?"

"Yes."

"Why he letting the fingers of Coelho being breaking by him, the Arab?"

"Could be, George, that the finger-breaking was just an act to make the theft look right when an investigation took place. If Fazai really wanted to make Coelho talk, he knew a score of ways to do it. Broken fingers aren't so painful. Do you feel strong enough to go to Cangamba for me, George?"

"How far that being?"

"About one hundred and fifty miles, there and back."

"I getting lost, maybe?"

"No. I'd send one of Kaputo's trackers with you."

"The journeying it is nothing. I am being well only with a tight and sore in the side a little. What I doing in Cangabble?"



Within seconds of this picture being taken, the black-maned lion at right chased Miki Carter up a tree. Then the angry beast climbed a neighbouring tree to keep an eye on Carter.



Peg Carter, "Africa's most beautiful camera-hunter", photographs a group of lions.

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

“Cangamba, George. You take a message from me to a black sergeant named Mote. You'll find him in the military supply store there. You will ask him for a roll of cotton wool. He will give it to you, and you will bring it back to me. Be careful of it, for I think the emeralds are in it, the roll. Damn it, George—you've got me talking like you talk! I'm a bit excited.”

George grinned. “Me too am exciting. I going now at the once. Thees Mote he knowing the emeralds being . . .?”

“Yes, he knows. He may not want to give you the cotton wool, but you will have a letter from Silva. You will say to Mote that Silva gave you the letter. Then Mote will give you the cotton wool.”

I went over the programme again and again with George. Then I asked Kaputo for the loan of his best tracker. The chief sent an old fellow who looked like a bundle of tendons held together by brown skin. His name was Someka. I said:

“Take your bow and arrows, Someka, for you will have to shoot the food you eat. You must travel slowly, for the white man is sick with a bullet.”

“I have joy in the fat white man, O Hunter. He is a mighty warrior. Ow!”

“Go courageously,” I said.

In eight days, George and Someka were back—and they had the roll of cotton wool. George took it into my hut and I began to unwrap it, but my hands shook so that I had to pause. I said:

“George, I've faced every sort of wild animal in Africa, but I've never felt so nervous as now. Did you have trouble with Mote?”

“When I asking for the cotton wool his eyes getting big and white. He jumping up and saying ‘No, no, no, no!’ I saying ‘Yes, Mote, for I being *Senhor Silva*,’ and giving Mote the letter. He reading it, the letter, then he laughing with all his teeth and giving me the rolling of cotton wool. I wrapping it

African Adventures

in much paper and coming away. Why you no opening it, the paper?"

I tore off the wrapping. An emerald peeped from the whiteness. I handed it to George, and put my questing fingers into the wool. Nothing. I shook the wool gently and two emeralds fell to the floor. George picked them up and said:

"They not being pretty, the emeralds. Why peoples stealing such ugly?"

"They're dripping with blood, George," I said.

"I no thinking about thees emeralds when I killing Fazai. I thinking of ostrich."

"You're a character, George."

"What is thees being, the character?"

"A character's a guy who thinks more of an ostrich than he does of a hundred thousand bucks."

"But that ostrich liking me."

"I know, George. Now put these emeralds in your tobacco pouch and keep them there until I want them. I'm going to try to figure how to get back at Silva without getting involved in a lot of legal stuff."

Shouting, and the padding of running feet took me to the hut's door. Twelve Bihe warriors wearing police belts were standing at attention before Silva's hut. Silva saw me watching and limped over to me. He said:

"Tomorrow at dawn, *Senhor*, you will accompany me to Cangamba."

"Do you really believe, Silva," I said, "that I stole the emeralds?"

"You took the buttons from the coat, *Senhor*."

"Are you certain that the emeralds were in the buttons?"

"Let us not have words, *Senhor*. I do not say that you stole the emeralds. I say that you must come with me to the magistrate."

"Consider carefully, Silva," I said.

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

“Tomorrow at dawn, *Senhor*,” he said, pointing to his *Bihs*. Then he shrugged and limped away.

I called to Kaputo. He came scowling, and said: “I have thirty warriors—and you are my friend.”

“No, no fighting, Kaputo,” I said. “Come into my hut.”

Inside, I gave him a handful of coarse tobacco. He put it in his mouth, chewed noisily and swallowed it. Then I talked, and Kaputo listened, grinning.

Towards evening, Kaputo returned to my hut, with Batu. We went into a huddle. After Batu understood my plan, he cackled like an old hen, but in the midst of the cackling, Silva appeared at the door, face dark with anger. He said:

“The witch-doctor must leave this *kraal* at once. If he returns he will be beaten with sticks by my policemen.” He glared at me and added: “Do not make it necessary for me to restrain you, *Senhor*. It is not fitting that black policemen should be called upon to . . .”

“You've twelve warriors, Silva,” I said. “Kaputo has thirty.”

Silva whirled on Kaputo. “You . . .”

“He is my friend,” Kaputo said.

“You haven't a chance, Silva,” I said, “if it comes to a fight. Let's make a deal.”

“I do not understand, *Senhor*.”

“Let's bargain,” I said.

“You must come with me to Cangamba, *Senhor*.”

“There's a chance, Silva,” I said, “that if we let Batu make the smoke, he'll be able to locate the emeralds. If he does locate them, you go your way, and I go mine. If he fails, I go with you willingly.”

“You mean this, *Senhor*?” Silva asked incredulously.

“I mean it.”

“But, *Senhor*, a witch doctor cannot . . . This is insanity! Do you mean this, *Senhor*?”

African Adventures

“You have my word.”

Silva stared at Batu for a long minute, then laughed abruptly. “Make the smoke. Make it immediately, tonight,” he said. “We shall leave at sunrise in the morning.”

Batu croaked like a frog. I said:

“Silva, you will come to see the magic?”

“In this hut?”

“Yes.”

“I will come, *Senhor*, and when the ‘smoke’ is finished, I will have Batu whipped from this *kraal* like a dog.”

Batu smirked.

After Silva was gone, Batu dug a hole about the size of a cup in the floor of my hut near the door. About a foot away, he bored a half-inch hole at an angle so it entered the larger hole near the bottom. In the angle hole he shoved a four-foot hollow reed. Thus, he’d made a smoking pipe. From a smelly skin bag that hung from his waist, Batu took a handful of powdered Indian Hemp, known variously as dakka, bhang, hashcsh and marijuana. He mixed the hemp fifty-fifty with tobacco and packed the mixture snugly into the “bowl” of the “pipe”. He lit a long taper of twisted grass, held it to the hemp and sucked on the end of the reed. He closed his eyes, inhaled deeply and snorted smoke from his nostrils. Then he said:

“Eeyo-eeeeee!”

Kaputo bent and took a deep drag. He, too, shut his eyes as he inhaled. He said:

“Ow!” and coughed.

Batu dipped into his skin bag again, came up with a small green bottle, uncorked and tipped it into a half-gourd the size of a muskmelon. Thick resinous juice of the hemp plant (churras) poured like cold syrup. He added water, stirred the liquid with his finger, took a swallow and said:

“Eeee-ak!”

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

He offered the gourd to Kaputo, but the chief refused. "Makes everything go too quick," he said.

At the other side of the hut, Batu drew a four-foot circle in the dirt with his big toe. Then he dumped the contents of another bag into the circle. I recognized the skull of a baby monkey, snakes' vertebræ, human finger bones, pebbles, leopard claws and crocodile teeth.

Squatting on his heels, sipping occasionally from the gourd, Batu studied the way the "bones" had fallen. At last he looked up, leered and said:

"The spirits come on the saddle of the wind. Go now until the moon is tree-high above the hill." He wrapped his head in his blanket, lay back and began to snore. George said:

"He being drunk, the *drole*."

"Only high, George," I said as we went outside.

Moonlight was silvering the roof of the forest when Silva arrived with six of his Bihes. Kaputo slipped away into darkness and returned in a few minutes with fifteen spear-armed warriors. Silva cursed, and sent his men away. Kaputo, grinning, dismissed his.

Inside the hut Batu raised a weird chant interspersed with short whinings like those of hyena cubs. I went in. The hut, pitch dark, was hot and airless. Batu heard me and his yelpings grew shrill. I said:

"Stop the noise, Batu. It's only me."

He cackled, then whispered: "Put the emeralds in the gourd."

I struck a match, dropped the emeralds in the dregs of hemp-and-water, and said:

"We are waiting, Batu."

Batu croaked: "The hut is filled with demons. They will ride astride the policeman's neck." He struck a match, lit a small fire in hollowed-out stone and put the stone on the floor just

African Adventures

outside the magic circle. He dropped punk on the flames, waited until there was only a deep, red glow, then sprinkled powdered hemp on the coals. Smoke rose straight up, wavered and spread through the shadows. I coughed. Batu squatted beside the brazier, his face an orange mask. He said:

“The demons are hungry.”

I called: “Bring in the guests, George.”

They came in one by one—Kaputo, Silva, Coelho, then George. They hesitated just inside the entrance. Batu said:

“Smoke,” and pointed to the reed sticking from the ground. Kaputo took a drag, walked to the edge of the circle opposite Batu and squatted on his heels. Silva looked at the pipe, shook his head in refusal. Batu said:

“Smoke.”

Silva put his lips to the reed, puffed distastefully, then seated himself beside Kaputo. George said:

“Such a stinking,” drew on the reed, inhaled, coughed and said: “Hasheesh!” and took several quick puffs. “I now having bubbles on the insides of me. Soon I singing,” he said, and laughed as he took his place next to Silva.

Coelho refused the pipe, and sat to the left of Kaputo. I sat beside George.

Batu sprinkled more hemp on the glowing punk. The sharp, sweetish smoke scratched at my throat and I began to feel light-headed. Batu gathered the bones from the circle, shook them in his palms, then dropped them to the ground. All fell within the circle except a crocodile’s tooth that came to rest in front of Silva. Batu screeched.

My heart thumped. Drops of sweat stood on Silva’s upper lip. Kaputo’s eyes seemed all whites. Batu chanted. His voice, low and rasping at first, rose to a crow-like cawing. Movements began in the shadows above Batu’s head. I knew I was a bit hopped-up, but the movements seemed real. Silva cursed under

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

his breath, his eyes fixed on a point beyond Batu's shoulder. His lips were loose.

George joined his deep bass to Batu's chant. I said: "Quiet, George." He stopped. Batu gathered the bones and threw them again. The monkey's skull lay upside down. Eyes wild, Batu foamed at the corners of his mouth. His face-muscles twitched; his hands weaved back and forth. The narcotic fumes filled my head with whirlpools and I grew fearful that my plan might collapse. Batu seemed to read my thoughts, for he looked at me and, for a brief moment, his eyes were sane.

Again he threw the bones. Again a crocodile tooth rolled towards Silva. It was hard for me to believe that Batu could cause those bones to do what he willed. Silva said:

"I'm choking. Let me out of here." He got to his knees. I restrained him with a hand. Kaputo moaned. George said:

"I hearing drums."

Silva crossed himself.

Coelho made noises in his throat.

Batu picked up the gourd, quaffed deeply, picked up the brazier and held it under his chin. He looked like a devil. With pink-rimmed eyes holding Silva's, he picked up the monkey skull, held it to his mouth, spat into it, then shook the skull as if it were a dice box.

It rattled.

Batu swept the bones from the circle with a palm, smoothed the earth and up-ended the skull. Three emeralds fell to the ground and glowed dully in the dirt. Silva clutched his throat. Coelho shouted. Kaputo laughed. I grabbed up the emeralds and put them in my pocket. Silva staggered from the hut, still clutching his throat. George began singing again.

I lit a candle and blinked in the sudden light. Batu gathered his paraphernalia, cackling all the while. He said:

"I came. Now I go," and disappeared into the night.

African Adventures

I took the emeralds from my pocket and stared at them. It didn't seem possible that the rabbit had been pulled from the hat. I said:

"George, flap a blanket about and see if we can get some of this smoke cleared out."

He didn't answer. I looked to see why. He was sucking on the reed pipe-stem. I jerked it away, broke it and pushed him through the door.

Coelho was so shaken that he had to be helped to his hut. He kept saying:

"I must tell the priest. I must tell the priest."

"Tell the priest what?" I said.

"The priest does not believe, *Senhor*, that witch-doctors work true magic."

"You still don't seem to know who stole the emeralds, Coelho."

"It was Fazai, *Senhor*. That now is assured. Fazai opened the buttons while I was sick with pain. I have thought much about it. It was all confusion, but I have intelligence in such matters."

"You're feeling pretty cocky now," I said.

"I should have ordered a search of Fazai's clothing. It is plain that the witch-doctor dug up the body and found the emeralds. But I was very sick, *Senhor*."

When I returned to my hut, Silva was waiting for me. He looked whipped. My ideas of revenge evaporated. I said:

"Coelho still thinks that Fazai stole the emeralds. Let him continue to think that." Silva licked his lips, tried to speak, swallowed, turned abruptly and left without saying a word.

To get away from the stale hemp smoke I took my blankets outside and lay down close to the hut. As I dropped off to sleep I heard George bellowing a song. The sun was peeping over the eastern hills when Coelho wakened me by shaking my shoulder. I sat up, still fuzzy from the hemp smoke. He said:

A Witch-Doctor's Magic

“We go now to Cangamba, *Senhor* Silva and I. May I have the emeralds, *Senhor*, please?”

I looked to where Silva stood beside a hut watching his Bihes filing towards the river. Beside another hut, a young Ambuella poured water over George's tousled head. I took the emeralds from my pocket, put them in Coelho's bandaged hand and said:

“Stick close to Silva, Coelho. He'll protect the emeralds with his life.”

Coelho smiled. “I have admiration for you, *Senhor*, for you are a friendly man. But you have not had experience in these things. I have lived a life of great peril and my wits consequently have been sharpened. *Senhor* Silva will indeed guard me, but there will be little need. The emeralds will be well hidden. You see, *Senhor*, I have still the buttons.”

“Coelho,” I said, “you're a genius.”

“That is true, *Senhor*, and I am also grateful to you. That is why I advise you to continue as a hunter. One must be of a certain intelligence to circumvent knaves. I go now to Portugal. Do not feel sad at the parting. I go to great honours.”

“Good luck,” I said.

George and I stuck around recuperating in Kaputo's *kraal* for another eight days, then took off for our camp. For about two hours I led the way along the trail, George plodding at my heels. My leg grew weak. I said over my shoulder:

“We'll have to rest pretty soon, George. My leg isn't so hot.”

He didn't answer. I glanced behind. No George. I went back along the trail and spotted George on his hands and knees talking to something on the ground. He looked up when he heard me, shushed me and said softly:

“Do not making the noise, please. He praying, the bug.”

I looked over George's shoulder. A praying mantis clung to a weed pod, its “hands” folded, its eyes turned upwards as if in devotion. I said:

African Adventures

“He’s a mantis. He *acts* as if he were praying. He *looks* as if he were praying, but he’s one of the worst killers in the insect kingdom. He kills and eats anything he can get hold of with those spiny forelegs.”

George got to his feet, sighed, and said:

“Peoples and scorpions and ants and mantises. I think I going home to that wife. She not eating her husbands. She got kind and good in the heart of her.”

A 10,000 DOLLAR BET

BACK AT THE WAGONS George and I discussed the best and quickest way for him to return to Greece and "that wife". Practically all his gear was stored at Balantyre on the other side of Africa. We'd almost decided to push down through south-west Africa to Walvis Bay, sell our wagon outfit and take ship to Cape Town, when I remembered we'd left instructions at Balantyre to forward our mail to Livingstone.

"You've been gone from home for seven months, George," I said. "There should be some mail for you."

George, who'd been sitting on the *disselboom* (tongue) of the wagon, jumped to his feet, pulled his battered hat down on his ears and said:

"We go. We go now. I having the bubble in the middle of me. That wife, maybe being writing the letters." Then, as if inspired, he added: "We can cablegramming in thees Livingstone?"

"Send cablegrams?"

"That is what I saying."

"Sure."

"That is where we going—thees Livingstone. I cablegramming that wife to meeting me in Johannesburg. Come, we go now."

Moera and Cahinga agreed to stay with us until we found others to take their places. We loaded everything shipshape and

African Adventures

backtracked to where we'd first crossed the Zambezi, then more or less followed that river through Barotseland. Near Senanga, we met a party of zoologists that was breaking up, and one of them, a red-head named Rory O'Rorke, who wanted to go to Johannesburg, joined us.

O'Rorke was a western American who'd been educated in Europe. I gathered he was a top-hole animal sociologist who specialized in organization of vertebrate groups. Most of the time he'd talk with an exaggerated American twang, but occasionally, when on a binge of scientific jargon, his voice was that of a cultured Irishman.

He was tall, lean and hungry-looking. His mouth was wide, nose sharp, and, when angry, his blue eyes turned grey. The three of us had been out for a long time, and looked like veldt rats.

A few days before we reached the border between Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia we picked up a couple of Hottentots to replace Moera and Cahinga. This proved a mistake, for soon the new men were joined by their families and we had an additional four women and eight or nine children to feed. We made camp inside Rhodesia with the intention of staying a couple of days to rest and clean up before going on into Livingstone.

Next morning O'Rorke and I started out to shoot meat, and George, too nervous to stick around camp, decided to go with us. We stayed out all day and returned with a buffalo calf at sundown to find our Hottentots throwing a family beer party. They had five big gourds of it left—about four gallons, and admitted they'd traded an ox-yoke and my favourite long-handled ox-whip for their beer.

“Where is this *kraal* where you got the beer?” I asked.

“Not far,” they said, and pointed south-west.

“Fine,” I said. “Now, all of you get the hell out of here and

A 10,000 Dollar Bet

don't come back." And, as punishment for the theft of the yoke and whip, I kept their beer.

Early next morning a man rode into camp, beckoned O'Rorke to him, said: "Mind my horse, my man," and tossed him the reins.

O'Rorke took the reins, and with cold, grey eyes, watched the stranger dismount.

"I say, chaps," the man announced, "you mustn't come through right here. Push up north a bit. I'm taking animal pictures. Name's Mills—deputy game warden, y' know. Bit of a name with animal pictures, y' know. Doing a great job for the fauna of Rhodesia. Mustn't be disturbed in my work, so push north."

"What being thees fauna?" George asked.

Mills looked at George as if George were dirt, ignored him, and said to me:

"There's sable over there behind those bushes. Don't move about. I hope to get photographs. Colour, y' know. Delicate work." He tossed a shilling to O'Rorke and said:

"Water my horse. I've another bob for you when I return."

We watched him strut off after the sable, and laughed.

"Jumping Jesus!" O'Rorke exploded.

George said: "He no liking me."

O'Rorke patted the horse's neck, led him under the tree where the five gourds of Kaffir beer were, emptied one gourd into a wash basin and held the basin under the horse's nose. The horse sniffed, and drank.

O'Rorke emptied another gourd, held the basin again, but the horse snorted and backed away. O'Rorke set the full basin down, tied the horse to the tree, and we all went about our business for an hour or so. The sound of the horse pawing the basin with a front foot, brought us back to him. He'd drunk

African Adventures

the beer and was asking for more. O'Rorke gave him two more gourdsful.

A little later, Mills turned up, puffing and angry because he'd got no pictures. He threw sixpence at O'Rorke, jerked the reins from the tree, adjusted them over the horse's head, stood with one hand on the pommel, and commanded:

“Be on your way at once.”

“Yes, sir,” I said.

He scowled at me suspiciously, leapt into the saddle and slid back over the horse's tail as the beast sat down, forelegs braced. Purple with humiliation, Mills kicked the horse on the rump, got him to his feet and remounted. The horse wobbled, took a few staggering steps, then spread his front legs like a giraffe does when drinking, and hung his head.

I thought Mills would have a stroke. He sat leaning back awkwardly, stirruped feet sticking out at an angle. Veins on his neck and temples knotted. The horse slowly lowered his rear end as if borne down by a too-heavy weight.

Mills got off, and kicked the beast in the belly.

“You kicking thees horse again and I busting you with both my hands,” George exclaimed.

“Shut up, George,” I said.

“I no shutting the up,” George replied angrily. “Thees horse being drunk. For why thees son-of-a-bitching being kicking him, the horse?”

Mills roared a curse and swung at George. He missed, and George's round-house right caught the picture-taker on the side of the jaw. He fell beside his horse—out.

I emptied the last gourd of beer on Mills's head and Mills sat up. The horse got to its feet, and Mills mounted. The horse moved forward uncertainly, then took off in a sideways shuffle.

We watched them out of sight, inspanned the oxen and

A 10,000 Dollar Bet

headed for Livingstone *without* "pushing up north". After a while, O'Rorke, walking beside the wagon, reached in a pocket, withdrew the shilling and the sixpence Mills had given him, looked at them, then laughed.

At Livingstone O'Rorke bought a railroad ticket for Johannesburg where he was to meet university scientists. George and I went to the post office. My mail was run-of-the-mill. George got letters from his wife. He sorted them according to post-mark dates, and read the first one as we stood at a street corner. He smiled and put it in his pocket. He opened the next, read a few lines and walked rapidly away. I watched him turn into a pub, figured he'd got bad news, and deciding he'd rather sweat it out by himself, went into a barber's shop, got a haircut and shave, then followed into the saloon.

George stood leaning on the far end of the bar, head in his hands. I put my hand on his shoulder. He turned towards me, tears dripping from the sides of his nose.

"Can I help, George?" I asked.

"No can helping." He wiped his eyes with the heels of his hands. He looked like a big, heart-broken kid. I felt a lump in my throat. And then I noticed he was smiling. I said:

"That's better—I thought you'd had bad news."

He opened his lips to speak, but started to cry again. I looked at the barman. The barman shook his head and indicated by motions that he thought George was crazy.

"For the love of Pete, George, what's eating you?" I demanded.

George put his hands on his stomach and said:

"I am being dancing all over the insides of me. I am being having it—the baby."

"Look, George," I said. "It's been months since you've had a drink—that's why it's gone to your head. Let's get out of here."

"The baby!" he said, and banged the bar with the side of his

African Adventures

fist. "You must drinking it with me—the bottle. For the first time I having it—the baby."

I bought a couple of drinks, toasted George, then taking his arm, started him towards the door. Suddenly he jerked away and stood holding a hand hard against his chest. Then smiling all the way to his ears, he spoke softly in Greek. I asked him what it all meant.

"I am being nice and loose on the all of me. Thees me, George Vossos, is now being it—the papa!"

For an hour or so, I stayed with George while he wandered around town looking up Greeks and announcing his big news. At first, I'd thought the baby'd been born, but it gradually dawned on me that the event wasn't expected for almost two months. I finally left George in the kitchen of a Greek restaurant with a bottle in one hand and a ham bone in the other.

I found a buyer for the oxen and wagon, sent a few telegrams, ate my first restaurant meal in more than five months, then went back for George. I found him in the same kitchen, surrounded by a half-dozen countrymen, all seemingly as thrilled about the baby as George was.

We stayed that night at the home of an old friend of mine, and, next morning, went out to book George's passage to Greece. He bought tickets by way of Johannesburg and Cape-town, then announced he had shopping to do. I arranged to meet him at the station shortly before train time.

Arms filled with packages, George was on the platform when I arrived. For the next ten minutes, I admired babies' sun-bonnets—blue ones, pink ones, yellow ones. Then, almost before I realized it, George was gone.

He wrote me a few times during the years. They'd named the baby Paul, and he admitted sadly in one letter that his wife "no liking them—the sun-bonnets".

A 10,000 Dollar Bet

WHAT I CALLED MY office and warehouse in Johannesburg was really a sort of catchall for freak trophies, unusual skins, unique native weapons, odds and ends. On one wall hung a koodoo head with one spiral horn and one straight one, a giraffe head with five unusually developed horns, a forty-inch hippo tooth, and a baboon head with incisors almost eleven inches long.

Tucked away on shelves along another wall were several black leopard skins I was saving until I got enough of them to make a karross. Scattered about were Pygmy bows and arrows, some deadly blowguns, discs for stretching lips of the duck-billed women of the Mangbetus, copper bangles, shell and stone necklaces, Zulu shields, Masai spears, and about a dozen worn-out rifles.

This "office" was in shanty town between the horse market and the Indian bazaar. An old Zulu, called *Voetsak*, took care of the place. I often slept in the office although I had a comfortable house on Isipingo Street in Bellevue East.

In a corner closet hung a Johannesburg baseball-team uniform. On a hook beside it, a well-worn fielder's glove and a pair of spiked shoes tied together by their laces. In a rack beside the uniform were three Lee-Enfield military rifles, one supplied by the Transvaal Cadets, one by the Witwatersrand Rifles, and the third by the Transvaal Medical Corps; I was on rifle teams of all three outfits.

While in town I seldom missed a morning on the rifle range out beyond Turfontein, and Sundays found me cavorting in left field at the Wanderers' Grounds. Shooting and baseball were my two loves.

Johannesburg had a four-team baseball league. Players were of all ages and from many occupations. There was sixty-year-old Jim Northrup, a successful business man who played first base for Johannesburg, and my fifteen-year-old brother Joe, who played left field for the Wanderers' nine—both top hands

African Adventures

when it came to playing ball. The league roster listed about sixty names, and almost every name belonged to a "character". The majority had played ball in the United States—in high school, college, semi-pro or minor league outfits. For a while we had a former major leaguer with us. I can't remember his name, but we called him Silver Jack.

Among the players were two Englishmen, Woods and Hutchinson, who refused to wear regulation-coloured uniforms, and played their positions in suits of brilliant red. The baseball field at the Wanderers' was larger than Yankee Stadium. The ground was hard-packed, red earth, as smooth and fast as concrete. When a ball bounced at the Wanderers', it really bounced.

Fans were from all nations—Yankees, Canucks, Britons, Germans, French, Russian—and all liked to cut loose in the manner of Brooklyn enthusiasts. It was a sort of compensation for the necessity of restrained dignity imposed by custom at cricket matches in an adjoining playing-field.

The race for the flag was always hot, and most games were tightly played. Occasionally, however, games became a circus. One Fourth-of-July the proprietor of Johannesburg's famous Old England Bar placed a keg of beer at third base. His idea was that any man reaching third, got a drink. That worked fine for about three innings; then it was decided to make third base, first base. So the rest of the game was played in reverse. Third basemen were ordered to move over to first base, and first basemen, to third base. The third basemen refused to leave the keg, so for the rest of that game we had four "first" basemen. It didn't matter, though, for rules were changed so that any batter who got to the beer barrel was credited with a run. I think the final score was Johannesburg 137—Crescents 141.

Then someone got an idea for a Fourth-of-July parade. We moved downtown, hired fifty rickshaws and bought fifty small

A 10,000 Dollar Bet

kegs of beer. Two men and one beer keg were assigned to each rickshaw. Someone dug up fifty small American flags, and the parade moved off down Eloff Street with the Stars-and-Stripes waving gloriously among beer fumes.

Nicest thing about Americans in Johannesburg during the first decade of the century was pride in being Americans. There was little of the loud-mouthed, boastful, overbearing attitudes of many Americans abroad today. Of course there were a few ignoramus who, after a few drinks, noisily proclaimed that "England is a ten-cent island", and "We licked the British in '76, and we can do it again." When such vermin showed up in Johannesburg in the old days, the decent Americans soon found ways to give the bum's rush.

Well, the parade went on for a couple of hours. It was noisy, but good-humoured. Johannesburgers lined pavements and smiled at the antics of the celebrating Yanks. There were no fights among the paraders, just plenty of cheering, singing and burping—and a few beery tears of homesickness.

The parade ended at the Rand Bar—the classiest in the city. It was owned by an American, an understanding guy. The bar was packed and hilarity was at its height when someone, probably from west of the Rockies, pulled a .45 and began shooting bottles off the shelves. All in fun, of course.

But British Law is British Law, and such goings-on couldn't be tolerated. Police came—lots of them. A conference was held with leaders of the paraders, then the Bobbies herded the whole gang into an empty second floor of a downtown building and asked them to stay until morning. They stayed.

Next day a committee waited on the owner of the Rand Bar, and gave him a cheque to cover damages.

I said that most of the Americans who played baseball were characters. I've forgotten many names, but I'll never forget Hungry Wilson, whose quaint Americanisms kept British

African Adventures

listeners in stitches; Hairless Roach, catcher for the Crescents, who rubbed castor oil and kerosene into his bald pate for more than a year in an effort to grow hair, and who was as astonished as others when his hair grew back with a rush; Jim Brady, of Detroit; Jim Raby, of York, Pennsylvania; McKeogh; McBride; Big Jones; Frank Mitchell of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, whose father once owned a half interest in the fabulously rich Simmer and Jack gold mine; Young Northrup, son of old Jim Northrup; "Johnny" Crabbe, a Canadian, who kept the league record books; and Doc Brennan, another Canadian, who played a good game of ball despite one of the biggest bellies in the Transvaal. Millionaires, miners, business men, mechanics—an assorted lot who succeeded in showing the best side of Americans to their hosts—the South Africans.

A number of Americans were members of the Union Club, among them, Nicobar Jones. One evening as we sat around sipping drinks while waiting for the dining-room to open, a member introduced a guest named William R. Carrie, a wealthy American of the Me-and-God school. He was a husky man in good physical shape who'd just returned from a nine-month shooting trip that covered most of Africa. He was introduced all round, and greeted each of us heartily until he came to Nicobar Jones, when he said sarcastically:

"Oh, the big-shot hunter!"

"Sort of," Jones replied.

Carrie drank three fast whiskies and began boasting about his trophies. His friend tried to switch subjects, but Carrie wasn't having any. He'd run giraffes down with a truck, shot lions from a tree-platform, bagged elephants from the rear, shot rhino from trees, and even bragged about getting a hippo with a sub-machine gun.

Jones, who always tried to give animals an even break, walked out and sat in another lounge. Carrie followed and said:

A 10,000 Dollar Bet

"I shot six hundred and seventeen animals in two hundred and ninety days."

"What for?" Jones asked.

"What for?" Carrie shouted. "Because I'm a sportsman—that's what for. I'm a sportsman."

"Of a kind," coolly replied Jones.

"Is that a crack?" demanded the boaster.

"Go away, Mister," Jones said.

Carrie's friend took him by the arm and dragged him off.

At dinner Jones and I sat at a table near the kitchen. Carrie and his friend ate at the far side of the dining-room. Nothing out-of-the-way happened until Carrie started on a bottle of sherry during dessert. After two or three glasses, he began glaring at Jones.

We went to the billiard room and were racking the balls for a game of snooker when Carrie entered, grabbed Jones by the shoulder and said:

"I'm a sportsman. Got lions, elephants, buffalo. I've the finest guns in Africa."

"You didn't really need guns. You could have got all those animals without so much noise," was Jones's rejoinder.

"You can't kill animals without guns," Carrie persisted.

"How do you think natives killed big game before guns were invented?" Jones asked.

Carrie glared. Before he could say anything further, his friend pulled him roughly from the room. In five minutes he was back.

"No guns. huh?" he exclaimed.

"Listen, fellow," said Jones, "I'm an old man, but even now, without a gun, I could get all the animals you bagged. I know a native tracker who could start out right now with only a hand-axe and, within sixty days, return with heads of elephant, lion, croc, buffalo, rhino and hippo. He wouldn't use guns or

African Adventures

poisons. Now go away, please, before I lose my patience."

By this time there was quite a group round us, and two husky club-stewards were approaching to be on hand if things got rough. Carrie's friend had disappeared. Carrie shouted:

"I got ten thousand dollars that says you're a liar, Jones. No man ever born could do what you claim." He pulled a note case from a back trouser pocket and waved bank notes in Jones's face.

"Wait here," Jones said. He went to the club office, got a thousand pounds from the cashier, came back and laid them on the billiard table. He turned to me, saying, "Take over," and left the room.

I said: "Carrie, the tracker's name is Ubusuku. He'll leave Kindu, Congo, wearing only shorts, his only weapon, a hand-axe. He'll return to Kindu within sixty days with the heads of an elephant, a lion, a croc, a buffalo, a rhino and a hippo. He'll use any additional weapons that he can fashion himself. No guns. No poisons. Jones has left this thousand pounds on the table. Lay yours alongside, and it's a bet."

Carrie threw his money down. Witnesses formed a committee to hold stakes and to work out details of the hunt. I slipped away, found Jones playing a slot machine in Raby's Arcade on President Street, and told him the bet was on. Jones said:

"Well, Carrie's got lots of money, and can afford to lose. But in the morning, if he wants to, we'll call the bet off."

Carrie didn't want to the next morning. In fact, he put up another four or five thousand dollars that was covered by club members. Details were simple. Carrie and I were to go with Ubusuku. Two Englishmen, D. C. Davis, and Arthur Aylcough, whose integrity couldn't be doubted, were to accompany us as referees. Both were wealthy, retired and tickled pink to share the novel hunt.

I sent for Ubusuku, who'd been home at his *kraal* in Natal for

A 10,000 Dollar Bet

a year getting families started among three new wives. He was a Zulu, twenty-six, chocolate brown, six-feet-four and weighed two hundred and five pounds. He'd been my tracker since we were kids. His father, Umgugundhlova, had been Jones's tracker for thirty years. Both killed big game with spear, knife or hatchet, and thought nothing of it.

Two weeks later, Ubusuku turned up and our party left next day.

Davis and Aylcough were fine types of men. They never complained and were always considerate. Both could out-shoot Carrie, but not once did they humiliate him by doing so. I've met many Englishmen like them—good men to be with when going is tough.

Nicobar Jones had selected the Kindu area for Ubusuku's hunt because in 1909 he'd taken an elephant census there for the newly-formed Belgian Congo Government and so could tell Ubusuku exactly where to find the easiest hunting for each animal on the list. However, we never got to Kindu.

Fifty miles or so above Kasonga, our boat smashed up on a hidden rock as we drifted close inshore. The water came only to our waists. We had little trouble saving our gear, but the boat was hopeless. We abandoned it, and on foot, pushed north-east through heavily-wooded country. Our plan was to find a native village and buy another boat.

Late on the first afternoon we entered an area of smaller, more scattered trees interspersed with tremendous baobabs. As darkness fell we emerged into an almost-treeless plain.

It was early December, and even in the shade the day had been hot, but as night grew deeper the temperature dropped and within an hour we were glad to hug our roaring fire. We travelled unusually light. Each of us had an army haversack containing necessities such as snake bite serums, antiseptics, bandages, tourniquets, small splints, morphine pills, candles,

African Adventures

waterproof matches, extra skinning knives, pocket knives, binoculars, spare rifle parts and folding cups.

Ubusuku's pack contained our screwdrivers, pliers, copper wire, extra cartridges, and a large can of castor oil to be used in preserving the heads. Each of us had two blankets rolled in green waterproof canvas, and a canvas water bag.

We carried no plates, table knives, forks or spoons; no tents, mosquito nettings, liquor or cooking utensils except one small billy with a folding handle. Each had one full bandolier over a shoulder, and a filled cartridge belt round the waist. All carried holstered choppers, and Aylcough and I lugged heavy-calibred revolvers.

Ubusuku had started out with only his favourite weapon, an American hand-axe with a specially-made twenty-seven-inch handle, but he now sported a seven-foot teakwood spear, and an eighteen-inch dagger. He'd made both from a sapling, tapering and hardening them by holding them in fire. The spear looked like an immense thorn; the dagger like a butcher's steel.

When I awoke at dawn, Ubusuku was squatting beside me waiting for my eyes to open. He flashed his white teeth and said softly:

“*Saku bona, Baas.*”

“I see you, too,” I said, and sat up.

Ubusuku motioned to the others still sleeping, and whispered:

“This is the place, *Baas*. Come without disturbing *Baas* Carrie, and I will show you.”

We walked north-east across new grass glistening with millions of minute water droplets. Here and there spiders had spread webs among branches of low bushes, and the webs were strung with tiny water pearls. Birds seemed everywhere—some flew in formation, others hovered. Starlings rose in a mob, fluttered and settled again. We'd gone about a mile when Ubusuku pointed as a spur-winged plover volplaned out of sight.

A 10,000 Dollar Bet

“Where did he go, *Baas*?”

“Into grass,” I said.

“No. He has gone to a river bank to visit crocodiles.”

I looked across the plain. It was as flat and smooth as a table. “There’s no river here,” I said.

“A little one, *Baas*. It is hidden. I saw it this morning when I walked in the darkness.”

We moved forward a couple of hundred yards and the ground dipped abruptly into a swale. It was boggy, and grass grew tall and coarse. Through the swale’s centre a rivulet ran between low sand-and-mud banks that bordered the stream like a wide ribbon. Instead of being smoothly flat, however, the sand at this point swelled and sank in a series of shallow billows.

Ubusuku moved slowly through the grass, and parallel with the sand strip. He stopped to follow the flight of another plover, then motioned me towards him, and pointed. A medium-size crocodile lay just out of the water. The plover roosted on the croc’s head.

“It is a sign, *Baas*,” Ubusuku said. “Here I will slay the crocodile for Old *Baas* Jones. Here also I will slay the elephant. They are nearby.”

“No elephants here, Ubusuku,” I said. “This time of year they’re high in the cool mountains.” I pointed eastwards to distant peaks now outlined by the rising sun.

Ubusuku moved back to a dip in the swale and said:

“*Figa lapa, Baas.*”

I went to him. He stood beside a deep impression of an elephant’s foot. Water lay three inches deep in the bottom of it.

“Old spoor,” I said. “It was made at least a month ago before the rains ended.”

“Not so, O Hunter. The water is from below.” He followed the low point of the dip, pointing to other elephant-foot “wells” here and there. He said:

African Adventures

“The dung is not spaced far apart so they are not travelling. The dung is scattered, and fresh dung overlays the older in some places. They drink from this river and stand dreaming among the bushes when their bellies are cooled. I will find the herd.”

As we headed back towards camp, a distant rifle shot told us someone had bagged breakfast. When we arrived, Aylcough had just finished skinning a haartebeest heifer. He handed me the liver. I sliced it and told Ubusuku to broil the slices on a stick. I walked back towards the trees, gathered leaves from a species of orchillas weed and brewed a fair-tasting tea in the common billy.

Through a mouthful of liver, Carrie mumbled: “We goin’ to live on nothing but meat?”

“There’s plenty of edible tubers, berries, greens, mushrooms and wild grain for the finding,” I said, “but there’s nothing wrong with a strictly meat diet. Incidentally, we can save a lot of time by starting the hunt right here. Ubusuku and I saw crocs in a little river this morning, and there’s elephant sign.”

Carrie scowled. I expected him to protest. Instead, he said:

“Looks to me like we’re making a sucker out of Ubusuku. He takes all the risks, and Jones or I get all the money. I don’t want to see the brown boy killed.”

“What about the bet?”

“Hell. Let Jones collect.”

“Let’s get straight on this thing, Carrie,” I said. “If you were to give Ubusuku a gun to go after the animals, he’d be almost certain to get killed. He’s a smart Kaffir, but he can’t get over the idea that the harder you pull a trigger, the faster a bullet goes. I doubt if he could hit an elephant from ten yards. But give him a spear, a knife, and his ‘little hatchet’, and with any luck at all, he’ll win the bet without getting even a scratch.”

Aylcough said: “Here’s something,” and rummaged through

A 10,000 Dollar Bet

his haversack and came up with a letter. He handed it to Carric and said:

“Jones told me to give that to you when ~~we~~ arrived at Kindu. But if the hunt’s to start here, you’d better have it now.”

Carrie tore open the envelope, read the letter, swore softly and handed the letter to me. I read it aloud:

If you’ve cooled off, Carrie, you probably realize you’ve made a bum bet. Ubusuku won’t fail. Go through with the hunt, if you wish, but forget the bet—and ~~no~~ hard feelings.—JONES.

“Could be,” Carrie said as I finished, “that Jones has cold feet.”

I laughed.

“Well,” he said firmly, “the bet stands, and the hunt starts here, if that’s the way you want it.”

Ubusuku spent the rest of the morning practising with his spear—that from a heavy three-inch butt, tapered to a sharp point. He hung the skin of the haartebeest from a low branch, stepped back about fifty feet, and grabbing the spear by its point, hurled it somewhat after the manner of a knife-thrower. On the first throw, the spear hit the skin broadside. Ubusuku stepped back five or six paces and threw again. The spear revolved once, end over end, and passed through the hide point first.

After a few more throws—all successful, he hung the dismembered carcass of the haartebeest against the hide, then grasping the spear’s point with both hands, the butt far back over a shoulder, whipped it forward, through carcass and skin.

“My word!” exclaimed Davis.

Aylcough said: “That could go clean through a rhino.”

“No guns!” commented Carric. “Damn it, that thing’s as powerful as a cannon!”

Ubusuku buried hide and carcass, went off with his spear and

African Adventures

came back in less than an hour with a 125-pound bush pig. The spear had buried half its length in the beast's body at the back of the ribs. I skinned the animal and cut chunks from the hams for each of us. We broiled them on sticks, ate our fill and then followed Ubusuku towards the little river.

We took positions behind bushes at the lip of the swale, adjusted our field glasses so that the river brink seventy-five yards away seemed only a few paces. Carrie stretched out on his belly, his .450 beside him. He was nervous although he tried hard to hide it. Twice within minutes he checked to be sure there was a cartridge in the rifle breech.

Aylcough adjusted his camera. Davis sat cross-legged, puffing an empty tobacco pipe in a manner that showed he was nervous, too.

Ubusuku angled down wind, dagger hanging from the left side of his belt, hatchet from the right. Half-way to the river he leaned his spear against a bush and went on without it.

Carrie cursed, fidgeted a few minutes, then whispered: "If he's going to try to kill a croc with that dagger, he's nuts!"

I smiled inwardly—I knew Ubusuku. He could have drilled a croc with the spear from a safe distance, but he loved to put on a show. This should be good.

The Zulu stepped into the river, submerged quietly and began swimming slowly up-stream. In imagination, I saw crocs speeding towards him from all directions. Instinctively, I readied my rifle.

Carrie loosed a deep sigh. Davis chewed the side of a finger. Aylcough ran the tip of his tongue back and forth across his upper lip.

Ubusuku crawled out of the water opposite us, bellied across the sand for about fifteen feet, then lay on his side, his back to the sun, one arm across his face.

"What th' hell!" Carrie said.

A 10,000^{-\$} Dollar Bet

“Bait,” I said nonchalantly. But my nerves were twitching. I’d seen this trick before, and didn’t like it. Watching a man lie motionless while a hungry croc sneaks up close is almost unendurable. Carrie, eyes dismayed, edged over to me.

“Bait?” he said. “You mean . . .?”

“Ubusuku’s seen a croc along there. Now he’s pretending he’s dead so the croc will attempt to drag him into the water. Not many men can remain motionless long enough to allay a croc’s suspicions. This may take hours.”

Carrie thought a little, then asked:

“Would you say Ubusuku’s sixty-five yards away?”

“Sixty-five or seventy.”

Carrie adjusted his back-sight.

“Don’t do any shooting, Carrie,” I warned, “you’d horse things up. Give the guy a chance.”

“But . . .”

“If it gets tough, I’ll do the shooting,” I said. “Get back to your glasses. Somewhere along there you’ll probably see two black knobs—crocodile’s eyes. And please don’t talk any more.”

I put up my own glasses, searched the edge of the stream, located the croc and said:

“One finger right from Ubusuku. Edge of water. Black rock about the size of small pumpkin. See it?”

All three men nodded.

“Croc,” I said. “Watch.”

Ubusuku lay like a dead man, but I knew he was watching the croc from under his arm. I suffered with him, for I knew he was being bitten by sand fleas, pestered by gnats, nipped by flies, chewed on by ants. I looked at the croc. The head seemed slightly larger, but I wasn’t sure. I couldn’t tell if it had seen Ubusuku. If it didn’t see him, it would drag itself into sunshine after a long look round. If it did see him, it would move as slowly as the hour hand on a clock—so slowly that the only

African Adventures

way you could know it moved was to turn your eyes away for a time, then back again.

It took at least thirty minutes for that croc to drag its full length out of the water. It was a big fellow, probably twelve feet from nose-tip to tail-tip. For a while it lay head towards us and we saw white fangs in a mouth that seemed to grin perpetually. Thinking to give Carrie an additional thrill, I said:

"If the croc gets Ubusuku, he'll drag him into the water and drown him, but won't eat him for probably a week. Crocs can't chew, so they let corpses rot until they can tear them into chunks small enough to swallow. If they're very hungry and can't wait for a corpse to really soften, they'll drag it to the surface, grip it in their teeth, dig a hind foot into it and pull it apart. Sometimes they just shake a corpse like a dog shakes a rabbit. And sometimes . . ."

"Shut up, damn it!" Carrie said. "I've had about enough. I never figured on any such . . ."

"Quict," Davis admonished. We looked at the croc. He'd made a little rush and had put a sand billow between himself and Ubusuku, and between himself and us

"Now it starts all over again," I said. "Watch the top of that mound that hides the croc from us and from Ubusuku."

I stared at the ridge of sand so hard and so long that it seemed to dance. Several times I saw two black knobs that I thought might be the croc's eyes as they pecked over the ridge, but when I blinked my eyes, the knobs disappeared and I knew them to be only spots caused by eye strain.

I rested my eyes, looked again, and blinked. This time the knobs didn't vanish. Little by little the croc's head lifted above the sand ridge, first appearing to be a small rock, then a larger one. Slowly the entire head was visible, teeth flashing their demoniac grin.

Ubusuku still seemed immobile.

A 10,000 Dollar Bet

I judged the croc's mouth was twenty feet from him, and nervous sweat ran down my sides. I wiped the palms of my hands on my thighs.

Carrie was white about the mouth, and breathed irregularly. Davis and Aylcough were as still as hiding antelope calves.

I figured the croc had eight feet or so to go before he'd make his rush to kill. He might stand on his toes, scurry forward and try to grab Ubusuku with his teeth; or he might whirl and slap the Zulu a crushing tail-blow. I checked the cartridge in my rifle chamber, pushed the bolt home carefully and sat, elbows on knees, finger on trigger.

The croc slid forward, stopped, slid forward again. Carrie said, "Christ!" and fired. His bullet thudded into the croc's side. The reptile reared, roared, fell sideways, stood on its tail, opened its jaws wide, roared again, whirled half round and smacked the ground with its belly, head towards the river.

Ubusuku leaped on the wounded beast's back, knelt just behind the head, bent forward and wrapped his powerful fingers around the croc's closed snout.

Only the top jaw of a croc moves—the lower jaw is joined solidly to the skeleton. A croc can crush a thigh bone by closing his jaws on it, but once the jaws are closed, any pair of strong hands can hold them shut.

I knew what Ubusuku was trying to do—keep a strain on the jaws so that when he loosed his grip suddenly, the jaws would open wide enough for him to push his dagger down its throat.

Closely followed by Davis, Aylcough and Carrie, I ran towards the battle. Too late. The croc whirled end for end, throwing Ubusuku clear. The Zulu leaped erect, and the croc's slashing tail banged against his ankles, cutting him down like a scythe lays grain.

Carrie's heavy bullet seemed to be taking its toll, for the croc

African Adventures

passed by Ubusuku and headed jerkily for the water. I drilled him through the neck. He shuddered and tried to get to his feet. I stepped close and put a bullet into an ear. And that was it.

Ubusuku said: "I heard the voice of the big gun, and it came to me that a man who blows much wind from his mouth also blows it from his other end."

"Ubusuku," I said, "Baas Carrie was . . ."

"Leave the boy alone," Carrie said. "I spoiled his game. I concede the crocodile's head."

Ubusuku stalked away. Aylcough watched him out of sight, then jumped as if stung, and said:

"Dammit—I forgot all about having a camera!"

KILLING WITHOUT GUNS

WITH BULLETS THROUGH THEIR hearts, duikerbok will sometimes run a hundred yards; elephants a half-mile; lions fifty feet. A crocodile, however, can live for an hour after the heart has been pierced. A croc's heart, cut from the body and wrapped in a damp towel, will palpitate a long time if kept warm.

The only shot that will instantly kill a crocodile is the one through an ear into the brain. The ears are about two inches behind the eyes and are fitted with horny flaps that are lowered when the croc is in water. Body shots don't pay off, for a wounded croc makes for the river, and if it dies, sinks. Neck shots usually pin a croc down, but it requires three or four of them to kill him.

Ubusuku's problem was to kill his croc on land so he could get the head. If he drove his big spear through the reptile anywhere except the neck, the croc would take off, spear and all.

There was no use telling Ubusuku to play it sensibly and safely—for once in his life he was the centre of interest and, an actor at heart, he was going to make the most of it. I wasn't much worried about his getting hurt—he was an experienced hunter and knew what each animal would do under any conditions. He had the strength of two men, astonishing stamina and perfect muscular co-ordination.

The sun rose hot the morning after Carrie's shot had spoiled Ubusuku's first attempt to get a croc. The pink-and-copper

African Adventures

dawn sky soon blanched to a reluctant grey. As the day advanced, even the birds fled the heat of the open savannah.

Davis, Aylcough, Carrie and I were ready to watch the crocodile chase by mid-morning, but Ubusuku dawdled, polishing his spear, rubbing oil on his dagger, whetting his hatchet on a stone. After a half-hour of this I said impatiently:

“Hurry up, Ubusuku.”

In Zulu, he said: “That man who shakes the trees with his wind must leave his gun in camp.”

“Baas Carrie was nervous,” I said. “He didn’t want to see you killed.”

“If a man’s bowels quake when he sees a crocodile, O Hunter, they will turn to liquid at the sight of a lion or an elephant. The windy one is more dangerous than is *ngonyama* or *indhlova*.”

Turning to Carrie, I said: “This big lug’s gone stubborn. He won’t play if you take your rifle. Mind leaving it in camp?”

Carrie began an angry reply, broke off abruptly and tucked his .450 under folded blankets.

“I’d just as soon go hunting naked, as without that gun,” he replied, “but if Brown Boy wants it that way—that’s the way it’ll be.”

A look of surprise flitted across Ubusuku’s face—for a white man to accede to a native’s wishes was almost unheard of.

“I have heard the voice of my *elhose* (guardian spirit), and it comes to me that the gun with the big voice will not hurt me.” Saying which, Ubusuku picked up Carrie’s rifle, and handed it to him. “It is not you, *Baas*, that is the *umfagozan* (rascal), but I,” he added. Then shouldering his spear, he headed for the river.

Carrie had won a friend.

Ubusuku walked upstream. We followed a little way behind. Twice, crocs slid into the water as Ubusuku neared them, but the big Zulu went on as if he hadn’t seen them—they weren’t large enough to interest him.

Killing Without Guns

After two miles, the flat banks of the river grew less sandy, more muddy. Large, dead, leafless bushes now lined the water's edge. Ubusuku stopped, held up a hand in warning, walked away from the river, circled, regained the bank one hundred yards downstream, laid his spear on the ground and slipped quietly into the water. He pushed out from the shore, turned on his back, floated a moment, turned over and sank with barely a ripple.

I focused my field glasses and searched the muddy bank where Ubusuku had held up his hand in warning. At one point, straggling brush opened a little, giving a view of the water as through a large picture frame.

I examined the river edge inch by inch, saw nothing. I asked the others to train their glasses on the same area. After several minutes, Davis said:

“Nothing but mud.”

Carrie, who'd not lowered his glasses, exclaimed.

“God Almighty!”

I looked again and this time, saw two rows of white fangs. Nothing else—just white fangs that vanished momentarily, then appeared again with a small bird picking at them. Then we saw the croc, the front half of its body out on the mud, tail and back legs in the water. Its dark, scaly skin was so like the colour of the mud that had it not moved slightly, we'd probably never have seen it.

“That's the baby he's after,” I said.

“What the hell's Brown Boy doing in the river with hungry crocs?” Carrie asked.

“He'd as soon fight them in the water as on land,” I said. “Once in the Okavango Swamp country I watched him fight a croc in a deep slough. He got the croc by a foreleg, hung on, and with a short-handled assagai, stabbed—stabbed—stabbed. The croc swam in a circle like a steamboat gone mad, Ubusuku

African Adventures

clinging to the leg and stabbing all the while. He killed that croc to demonstrate to me that shooting crocs *with guns* was, as he said: 'work for fat women'."

Davis, still peering through his field glasses, asked:

"Why does Ubusuku go into the water?"

"You can't crawl through mud silently," I said. "It sucks at you. Ubusuku will approach this croc from behind—under water. That way, he can move silently, and the water will prevent the croc getting his scent."

Aylcough adjusted the telescopic lens on his camera with trembling fingers, pushed his hat back off his forehead, loosened the neck of his shirt and said:

"He's been in the river for at least ten minutes. Do you think . . .?"

"The croc's ears!" I said. "Look!" The ear flaps were fluttering like shirt-tails in a wind. The bird flew out of the croc's mouth, settled on the reptile's back momentarily, then darted away.

"Croc's ear flaps flutter when the beasts are excited," I told the others. "He probably senses Ubusuku." Then Ubusuku's head—a dark, round ball, appeared at the river's brink. The croc twisted its body as if to start back into water. Ubusuku popped out on the mud beside the croc, his long-handled hatchet held high. Down it came on the small of the croc's back with all of Ubusuku's strength behind it.

The front half of the croc's body threshed from side to side. The tail end didn't move: Ubusuku had severed the backbone. The croc roared, lifted its foreparts, pointed its snout to the sky, opened its mouth wide, bellowed and remained in that position for several seconds. Then the body fell, sending up a spray of mud.

The hatchet was still buried in the croc's back. Ubusuku grabbed it, tugged, but couldn't get it out. He jerked his dagger

Killing Without Guns

from his belt, leaped to the croc's back, and pushed the dagger-point into an earhole driving it home with a blow of his other hand. The thrust brought instantaneous death.

Leaving his dagger in the ear, Ubusuku went back to his hatchet, bent his back and jerked violently. The hand-axe, evidently caught under the backbone it had severed, came out suddenly and Ubusuku sat down hard.

Not for one moment during his attack on the croc had Ubusuku forgotten he was the top performer in an exciting show. Now, squatting in the mud, heels raised, he got to his feet, gave us a sheepish glance and retired behind some brush.

Chuckling, we walked over to the croc. It still grinned, but its eyes were fogged in death. It was a big male—between thirteen and fourteen feet long, I guessed. Aylcough photographed it.

I pulled Ubusuku's dagger from the ear, made a cut through the heavy skin at the shoulders. When I'd cut all the way round the base of the neck, I yelled for Ubusuku and, with knife and hatchet, the two of us severed the head from the body.

A croc's head is difficult to skin, particularly round the ears, eyes and nostrils, but we did a fair job and Ubusuku lugged the messy skull to an ant heap. We'd seen no hyena or jackal sign, so left the skull unprotected while we went looking for greens, tubers and young plant shoots as a change from a meat diet.

At sundown Ubusuku brought the skull to camp. It was as clean as a newly-washed dish. We let it dry for a few days, then rubbed it well with castor oil to discourage bone-boring insects. We dried the head-skin in shade, fleshed it with a blunt knife and rubbed in salt and wood ashes as a preservative.

When the job was done, Carrie said with a grin:

"Elephant, rhino, hippo, buffalo, lion and crocodile. Six animals. I've bet about \$15,000. That means that this head'll cost me 2,500 bucks."

African Adventures

"And jolly well worth it, I'd say," Aylcough said. "I've faced two or three wild animals in one place or another, but I don't think I was ever quite as near funkering it as I was when watching Ubusuku. Don't know if I want to watch him do in an elephant, or not."

"The elephant shouldn't give Ubusuku much trouble," I said. "There are several safe ways to kill elephants, and Ubusuku knows all of them."

"I got one in Nigeria," Carrie said, "coming at me ears out, trunk up, and squealing. Old Jones doesn't seem to think much of heavy rifles, but if I hadn't had a .510 that day I wouldn't be here now."

"Sure," I said, "elephants can be dangerous, but that doesn't mean they're difficult to kill. Pygmies get them with poisoned arrows. Mangbetus sometimes sneak up on an elephant, shove a spear into its belly from below, then get behind it and yell. Elephants always face towards the point of danger. When they turn in a hurry, they lower their rear ends. If a spear's dangling from the belly when the elephant squats to turn, the ground pushes the spear deep into the guts."

"To hear you talk," Carrie said, "you'd think that elephants are blind and deaf."

"Not deaf," I said. "With those big ears spread they can hear sounds a mile or more away when the wind blows towards them. And they aren't blind, but I doubt if they can recognize a man fifty yards away even by evening light. In bright sunlight they can't spot a man, as a man, at thirty yards. If a man comes from downwind, he can approach within fifty yards of almost any elephant. It's not until they get your smell that they become really panicky."

"With the exception of some of the antelopes, most wild animals let a man come within fifty or sixty yards before taking off. And even the antelopes will often let you come right up to

Killing Without Guns

them if you're riding a horse. I don't know how Ubusuku plans to kill his elephant, but I told him I don't want any more of the Hollywood stunt-man stuff he pulled with the crocs."

While Ubusuku was away scouting up an elephant herd, the rest of us did a bit of hunting. Carrie bagged a wildebeest and a buffalo cow. Davis got a roan antelope with good horns, and Aylcough got pictures of drinking buffalo that made him happy.

I watched Carrie and Davis prepare to take the heads from their animals, stopped them and said:

"For some reason, most men come to Africa to hunt without first learning anything about skinning and preserving trophies. Both of you started your neck cuts too near the heads. Nothing looks sillier than a mounted head with a too-short neck." I took Carrie's skinning knife and said: "Watch."

I cut the mask of Davis's roan round the base of the neck close to the shoulders, cut *round* each horn, then across *between* the horns. Next cut was down the *back* of the neck to the mask-cut at the body. Skinning ears, eyes and nose is work for a careful man. Natives are invariably careless and slash away happily with long-bladed knives. The truth is, the best skinning-blade is never more than two inches long, and that's long enough to do a skinning job on rhino or elephant, too.

There are several ways of taking off a body hide, but, in my opinion, only one correct way. Lay the animal on its back and cut from the lower jaw to the base of the tail. Don't cut *through* the testicle bag. Cut around it. Make leg cuts on the *inside*.

Dry skins in the shade. In wet weather, dry them slowly beside, or over, fires. Skins to be mounted *must not* be stretched. Shrinkage will occur, but normal size can later be regained by soaking and stretching. Stretch and peg out skins that are to be used as rugs.

African Adventures

Flesh skins with a dull knife. Thin the thick places on heavy skins by scraping. Do *not* use wood ashes for curing. Ashes cause the hair to fall out. Do *not* use alum and saltpetre, either. Alum on a fresh hide makes it so stiff it will be almost impossible to wet back for proper dressing. For curing, use salt alone; or just dry the hide in the shade, and *keep it dry*.

Skulls are easiest fleshed by putting them on an ant-hill. However, be sure to have a reliable native to guard them from crawling scavengers. Also remember that there are millions of beetles and borers eager to get at your trophies. The only way I know of keeping them out is to have all skins and skulls absolutely free of flesh and cartilage.

Rub all bones, skulls and horns well with castor oil. Do a good job of rubbing it in, for if you don't, you'll find that boring beetles have made sieves of them.

If you're the type who doesn't like skinning, let your natives do it, but *make all first-cuts yourself*. I've never known a really good native Skinner.

Lastly, measure your beasts. Measure accurately, particularly round the neck back of the horns, round the chest, belly, in front of the back legs, round the legs, and from tip of nose to base of tail. Too few measurements puts your taxidermist in a tough spot.

EARLY NEXT MORNING AS we plodded through dew-wet grass, a small herd of impala dashed from behind bushes and raced towards us. We froze, hoping they'd come close enough for Aylcough to get pictures, but they saw us at about three hundred yards, veered at right angles and went bounding and jumping away.

It was a white man who'd scared the herd. He stepped into the open, looked a long time at the impala, now specks in the distance, then tossed his rifle on the ground, took off a white

Killing Without Guns

cork helmet, threw it beside the rifle and lay face down, head on his arms.

When we got close, he heard us, sat up and said, with a Spanish accent:

“You found me, thank the Mother of God!”

His eyes were sunken, face blotchy-white. Muscles twitched at the corners of his lips.

“Are you sick,” I enquired.

“Hungry,” he said, “perhaps sick also. Four days ago I sent my two white assistants to hospital down river. Fever. My porters deserted. I have been alone. I have tried to shoot meat, but with a gun I am not good.”

I gave him bush-tea from my canteen, and biltong from my haversack. He chewed hungrily on the hard, dry meat.

“I was never alone before,” he told us. “The porters took my canned foods.” He rubbed a shoulder saying: “My shoulder is very sore. I shot many times and always missed.” He held out a hand, and I pulled him to his feet.

“Gentlemen,” he announced, “I am Salvador Montano.”

I introduced Carrie, Davis, Aylcough and myself.

“I am the Montano,” the stranger informed us.

“Where is your camp?” I asked.

“You do not know of Salvador Montano?” he enquired wonderingly. “Montano, the friend of Hideyo Noguchi? Montano, who is of the University of Mexico? You have not heard?”

Aylcough said: “You study animals, don’t you? I heard of you in Cochin-China.”

Montano beamed. “That is Montano,” he said, “who has measured, weighed and compared the organs of birds and animals all over the world. You have found me. Now you will come to my camp and help me to carry on my great work. You will shoot the elephants and the river horses for me. Yes?”

African Adventures

“Well,” I said, “we’ll help you line up some porters. We need some ourselves. And I know of a white hunter near Kama, not far from here. Where’s your camp?”

“I am not certain, *Señor*. I walked for two days, shooting—shooting. Not once did I wound an animal. The camp is on the river, Ulindi, and not far from this Kama of which you speak. I am in great worry, *Señor*, for in the tents I have many specimens in bottles.”

• Davis and Aylcough volunteered to find Montano’s camp and to stay there until the rest of us arrived. Carrie, Montano and I waited for Ubusuku. Two days later he arrived with news of a small elephant herd less than ten miles from where I judged Montano’s camp to be.

En route to Montano’s, we heard singing in the brush to our left. Ubusuku went to investigate and returned shortly exclaiming:

“Wagenias. Many of them. They go to Stanleyville to spend shillings. They wait for you to talk your wishes.”

Anatole, the Wagenia head man, told me he had sixty-two men with him. They’d been working as porters and hunters for an American motion picture outfit and had been discharged when they had refused to go into the cold of high mountains in the Kivu district. They were willing to work for us, but not for long, as they had money to spend.

Ubusuku refused to have anything to do with the Wagenias. He said they smelled of fish, and to a Zulu, fish is loathsome. Nor did the Wagenias like Ubusuku. Anatole confided to me privately that it was plain to him that Ubusuku was the result of a love match with a female baboon. I had to order Ubusuku to stay away from the porters because, by scowlings and mutterings, he indicated he’d like nothing better than to fight all sixty-three of them.

Montano’s camp was a mess. The expedition had spent lots

Killing Without Guns

of money, but almost everything was wrong. Tents were of poor quality, and so large and complicated that engineering knowledge was almost required to manipulate them. None of the cartridge or film cases was waterproof, so, of course, all film was ruined and cartridges liable to misfire. Kerosene had spilled over many things. Instead of hard tropical candles, they'd bought soft ones which had melted into flat cakes. Food boxes had no locks—an invitation to natives to help themselves—which they certainly had. Furthermore, all boxes were of wood, and had been set on the ground instead of on stones or blocks with the result that bottoms had rotted.

The camp stank, and we finally traced the smell to piles of skins that had been improperly fleshed, and rolled up. The only things in really good condition were Montano's specimens, kept in air-tight glass jars.

Two days were required to put things shipshape. Davis proved a good man with natives and had them co-operating cheerfully in no time. It became evident that both Davis and Aylcough knew a lot more about hunting-safaris than they cared to disclose.

When I briefed Anatole one morning on how to find the white hunter near Kama, Carrie said:

“Seems to me we could go on with Ubusuku's show and, at the same time, stick with Montano.”

“We could,” I said, “but I don't want to get tied up. There's work waiting for me as soon as we get back to Johannesburg. We can stick around, though, until this white hunter shows up.”

“I've been talking to Montano,” Carrie said. “He's willing to let me be his hunter.”

“You?”

“Why not? We've lots of good natives now. All I have to do is point a gun and pull the trigger. I'd rather be a professional

African Adventures

hunter than to make another *million*. Ever since I was a boy, I've . . .”

My heart went out to the guy. “Carrie,” I said, “natives will take you to the game, but when you’re ready to shoot, you’re on your own. You can’t depend on natives to stick when things go bad. There aren’t many natives like Ubusuku, you know.”

“I think I can stand up to anything that might happen,” he said.

“Well,” I replied, “it’s okay with me. Bear in mind, though, that it isn’t how *hard* you hit animals, but *where* you hit ‘em.”

“Elephants,” Carrie said, “are what Montano wants next.”

“Well, elephants’ skulls are filled with air cells. Doesn’t do much damage to blast their big heads, but there’s a soft spot about two inches above an elephant’s eye. A bullet there, will shatter the brain, but that spot isn’t exactly in the same place on every elephant. Head shots will likely get you into trouble. It’s better to put four or five slugs in the muscular part of either shoulder—destroy the big concentration of blood vessels there and the elephant will die before he’s gone fifty yards. A heart shot’s good, but the animal may travel a half-mile before it drops. If an elephant charges, remember that you can outrun him, and that if you get forty or fifty yards away, he can’t see you.”

“What do I do next?”

“Take over,” I said. “You’re Montano’s white hunter now.”

Carrie turned away, trying to hide the exaltation in his eyes. He seemed like a little kid who’d unexpectedly found himself sitting on Santa Claus’s knee.

“Next morning, Davis and Montano stayed in camp with the porters while Carrie, Aylcough and I went elephant-hunting with Ubusuku.

Ever since I’d asked him to lay off the Hollywood stuff, Ubusuku’d acted liked a spoiled brat. He refused the help of the

Killing Without Guns

Wagenias in bringing our gear from our own camp, and had eaten alone by his own fire. Now as he stalked ahead of us across the brush-studded plain, I called to him in Zulu:

“The bird that is silent too long forgets how to sing, Ubusuku.”

He paused and said:

“That is true, *Baasje*. Also, the raven that squawks too much gets a sore throat. You have told me to kill, not as the lion, but as the snake. Therefore, I will kill like a snake; and Umgungundhlova, my father, will be told of this and he will feed me mice when I return to his *kraal*.”

“Okay, be a snake,” I said, “just don’t spoil the heads.”

“The head of the elephant will receive no hurt that cannot be mended with needle and thread, O *Umganaam* (friend of mine),” he rumbled, and stalked on again.

So, that was the way he planned to kill the elephant! Bleed it to death! I didn’t like the method, although it’s painless. Ubusuku would make a deep cut in the trunk, probably with his hatchet. The wounded beast would fuss, fidget, blow, rumble and cough at first. Then it would smell the blood, grow panicky and lumber off to collapse and die.

It was a method of killing used by several central and west African tribes, a method more humane than the use of poisoned arrows or a multitude of spears, yet I hated to see it used.

Ubusuku led us through a bosage of sparsely-leaved small trees and out into a long, narrow field rank with a five-foot growth of broom-like weeds covered with fuzzy, pale-lavender blossoms. The breeze blew strongly towards us, bringing barely-perceptible elephant-herd noises.

“I’ll not be able to get a picture in these weeds—they’re too high,” Aylcough commented.

“Don’t talk,” I cautioned. “The wind may change direction.”

Ubusuku picked his way among the lower bushes. We

African Adventures

followed, trying not to stir up little clouds of fluff from the blossoms. Upon Ubusuku's signal, we stopped beside an isolated thorn-tree. The big Zulu took off his shorts—he wore nothing else—walked a few yards to a pile of fresh elephant dung and rubbed himself liberally with it.

“Where's the elephant?” Carrie whispered.

Ubusuku pointed.

We moved out to one side of the tree, and there it was! A male, about fifty yards away, facing us, ears spread wide, the ripples at their edges appearing in relief because of a peculiarity of the light. Through my glasses, the beast's eyes showed only mild curiosity. The great trunk, partly hidden by a tall, leafless shoot, hung relaxed. The tusks were not particularly large—about forty pounds each—but they were well-matched, with perfect tips.

When he'd taken his shorts off, Ubusuku'd placed spear, dagger and hatchet on the ground. Now he took the hatchet from its holster, felt the edge, said softly to me:

“*Indhlova* knows we are here, but he thinks we are baboons. I will go now. Do not let the red-necked *Umlungu* (white man) shoot the big gun.”

I nodded. Ubusuku dropped to hands and knees and crept away at right angles to the elephant.

Ubusuku took his time stalking. I couldn't see him, but knew he was circling so as to close in on the elephant from behind, trusting to the manure on him to hide his own smell when he arrived upwind. Although I'd seen no other members of the herd, I knew they were close, and that Ubusuku was being careful not to alert them.

Twice while we waited, the elephant turned and faced the opposite direction, raising its trunk, testing the air, cocking and fanning the big ears. He turned to face us again each time without signs of unusual agitation. In turning, he'd turned to the

Killing Without Guns

right, and I knew Ubusuku would be watching for just that manoeuvre. Elephants habitually turn in only one direction—some to the right, some to the left. Seldom, even under stress, will one turn in the opposite direction.

If startled, they turn towards the point of danger, thrusting trunks straight out as they turn. It was Ubusuku's plan to cause this elephant to turn, and to be close to the out-thrust trunk when the turn started. The elephant, fears lulled, was slowly flapping its ears against its withers when Ubusuku, who had bellicid through the broom as soundlessly as an adder, stood erect beside the beast's right flank, moved quickly towards the shoulder, raised his hatchet and said: "Ai." The elephant's ears opened like wings, its trunk shot straight out, and it almost sat down as it turned frantically towards Ubusuku. The hatchet flashed, almost severing the trunk about a foot from the tip. The elephant screamed, blew what looked like a cloud of black smoke from the wound, whipped its trunk straight up, smelled and tasted the blood, then shrieked in fear and rage.

Trumpetings, mixed with the squalls of totos, rose from the herd. The wounded elephant swung end for end. His screaming ceased abruptly as Ubusuku dodged behind him. I knew that with one blow of the hatchet, Ubusuku'd severed the tendons of a hind leg about a foot above the ground—I'd seen him do that before.

When the hatchet bit into its leg, the elephant seemed to shrink into itself. Ears hung limp; bleeding trunk dangled listlessly. Rumbling deep in its chest, the elephant then did something I'd never before seen an elephant do—it sank to its rear end, flopped over on its side and lay still. Noises of the frig'ened herd faded into the distance.

Carrie, beside me, asked in a puzzled voice:

"What happened? I saw the axe raised, then what?"

"He almost cut the beast's trunk off, then severed a tendon

African Adventures

in a back leg," I said. "Most animals can get along for a while on only three legs, but not the elephant—he needs four. Apparently this poor fellow sensed he was all through, and lay down to die."

"Severed the trunk?" Carrie said wonderingly.

"Large arteries and veins," I informed him. "When they are severed, the animal quickly bleeds to death. Ubusuku's won this part of the bet, too, Carrie. Why don't you walk up and end that beast's misery?"

"Yes," Carrie said doubtfully. "What'll I do?"

"Put three or four slugs through the heart," I said.

And Carrie did.

While Ubusuku and Carrie went back to camp to get Montano, Aylcough and I waited beside the dead elephant. Montano came with all of the porters. They set up an immense wooden tripod, and from its apex, they hung a weigh-master's scale. On levelled ground, they placed small bullion and platform scales. Montano rolled up his sleeves, made first cuts through the elephant's hide, motioned the skinners to start work, stood back, rubbed his hands together and smiled.

Four hours later, with porters and scales dripping blood, and sections of elephant piled all over the place, Montano handed me the following tabulation:

Length: tip of tail to tip of trunk, 23 feet 1 inch. Height at shoulder, 10 feet 2 inches. Total weight, 14,023 pounds. Weight of skeleton, 983 pounds; of legs below knees, 967 pounds; of skin, 2,119 pounds; of head skin, 496 pounds; of skull, $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; of lungs, 299 pounds; of genitals, $75\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; of kidneys, 35 pounds; of stomach and intestines, 2,114 pounds; of heart, 51 pounds; of brain, $10\frac{3}{4}$ pounds; of left tusk, 33 pounds; of right tusk, $35\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. Circumference of heart, 4 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches; of front feet, 56 inches; of hind feet, 53 inches;

Killing Without Guns

of body behind shoulders: 14 feet 11 inches. Thickness of skin, 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Age, about 40 years.

There was other data on glands, eyes, muscles, tissues and what not. Parts of internal organs were placed in glass jars, as were sections of blood vessels, tissues, and a half-pint of blood.

Montano, pleased with results of his work on the elephant, skinned out the head for us, sewed the cut trunk and made measurements for the taxidermist who'd mount the head for Carric.

Two days later, where the river swung in close to camp, Ubusuku made a perfect shot with his spear on a 3,000-pound hippo. The point of the thrown spear entered the beast's skull behind the eye, killing instantly. The spear wedged itself solidly in the bone, and to withdraw it, Ubusuku had to use every bit of his strength. As with the hatchet in the crocodile's back, the weapon came out suddenly and the Zulu turned a back somersault. He sprang to his feet, glared at the Wagenias but they didn't laugh.

Montano went through the same process with the hippo that he had with the elephant. His figures showed that the beast weighed 3,224 pounds; the skin, 440 pounds; stomach, 831 pounds.

That night we had roast hippo for supper. Happily, Montano's thieving porters had left him some tinned butter, and spices. Hippo is excellent meat, reddish, of good texture, and tastes like pork. I cut out a beautiful sixteen-pound sirloin, spread it out, salted, peppered and sugared it, sprinkled it with powdered thyme, dotted the meat with butter, rolled all tight and tied it securely, rubbed the outside with more butter and put it in Montano's Dutch oven. I tied the lid down with wire, set the oven on a bed of wood coals, heaped burning brands over it until the metal heated through, then reduced heat by

African Adventures

thinning the coals, and kept it at moderate, even temperature for about three and a half hours.

Supper was late, but the savoury steam that pervaded our camp grew more enchanting every minute. During the last half-hour of the cooking, all of us sat, gently drooling.

And the five of us ate every ounce of that roast.

HOW TO COOK A CROCODILE

(AND OTHER BIG-GAME RECIPES)

AMONG MY MOST PLEASANT memories are nights beside African camp fires when, having swallowed the last delicious portion of a roast of young zebra, or duikerbok, we'd move back from the fire, set mugs of tea on the ground beside us and light our pipes. There was usually silence until the tea was finished, then someone would start a topic, and we'd all be off in a cloud of reminiscence.

That is what happened following the hippo feed. Carrie sat with his back against a tree, the smoke from his mellowed calabash pipe a thin cloud in the still air. Aylcough sat cross-legged, his big, black-bowled pipe steaming like a kettle. Davis sat on an empty paraffin tin, close enough to the fire so that every few minutes he could pick up a glowing stick to re-light a char-rimmed brier that was continually going out. Montano was at a camp table, papers spread before him, his slender-stemmed pipe held to his mouth by a crooked forefinger. I sat on a short log cleaning my rifles and enjoying a battered corncob.

Fifty yards away the Wagenias, stuffed with cornmeal mush and half-raw hippo meat, were beginning to roll up in their blankets. Midway between them and us, Ubusuku sat in regal solitude beside his own fire, fitting the tapering end of an

antelope horn on the point of his spear. From time to time he would take a piece of hippo meat from a pan on the coals, toss it from hand to hand to cool it, then pop it into his mouth. He seemed absorbed, but I knew he was alert to every night sound—a mouse scurrying before a ravenous snake—the swish of a night hawk scooping insects from the air—the snorting of a lone hippo in the nearby river—a sudden frantic rustling in the brush . . .

“Brown Boy looks lonesome. Too bad he can’t come and sit with us,” Carrie commented.

“He wouldn’t come,” I said. “He’s a proud Zulu.”

“Too proud to sit with white folks?”

“Yes. He works for us—is loyal, honest and obedient, but as he once said to me: ‘The white man offers us salt with one hand while, with the other, he steals our supper.’”

Then Carrie remarked: “I feel silly about my bet with Jones. The way Ubusuku handles the big animals has changed my ideas about hunting. I don’t suppose even the lion would give Brown Boy a really bad time.”

I told him that I once saw Ubusuku kneel before a charging lion, rest his spear butt on the ground and roll clear as the lion impaled himself. He digs pits for rhino—pits with sloping sides that squeeze the beast’s feet together. African natives were killing big game for thousands of years before guns were invented.

“You asked for that bet, Carrie,” I added.

“Well,” Carrie said, “I’d like to call the thing off. I’ll get a lot more fun out of being hunter for Montano. I’ll pay off, of course.”

“You’ll have to pay off those others you bet with,” I advised, “but Jones won’t accept your money unless Ubusuku fulfills the terms of the wager.”

“Then I’ll give the money to Ubusuku.”

“You can’t do that, either. Ubusuku’s got three or four wives,

How to Cook a Crocodile

but he'll be ruled by his father until the old man dies. Give the money to Umgugundhlova. Tell him you're rewarding him because he's the father of a mighty hunter. That'll please the old man, and Ubusuku will benefit in the long run."

"Good idea," Carrie said with enthusiasm, "I'll do that. We'll talk details later."

Davis, who'd been in a huddle with Aylcough, walked over to Montano, talked earnestly a few minutes, then turned to me and said:

"Montano's moving over to Tanganyika as soon as he can get porters to replace the Wagenias. Instead of going back to Johannesburg, Aylcough and I are going to Tanganyika, too. I'm going to take charge of the safari. Aylcough wants lion pictures."

"You'll have no trouble getting porters around Kasongo," I told him. "And for lions, try the Serengeti Plains where they're comparatively tame. Ubusuku and I will pull out for home day after tomorrow."

The next day Carrie and Anatole went down-river to hire porters. Davis and Montano busied themselves sorting stores. Aylcough and two of the Wagenias went across country to photograph whatever they could. Ubusuku and I went hunting for meat.

Africa is the world's largest meat larder, and almost every pound of meat from young or old beasts and fowl can, with proper cooking, be served as a delicacy. There is no meat in Africa so insipid, strong, or tough that it cannot be made enjoyable and healthful food. That goes for everything from elephant to water lizard.

Basic rules of good cooking are unknown to millions who daily "cook" food. For instance, housewives look at a piece of beef neck, or some other less choice cut, and say:

"This is tough and stringy. Best thing I can do with it is to

African Adventures

boil it well." This they proceed to do, not realizing that the harder one boils meat, the tougher it gets. Boiling meat properly is one of the finest ways of preparing it, and one of the most difficult.

Take the tough-fleshed waterbuck, for example. When boiled as most cooks boil, the meat is practically unchewable. But simmer it gently and long, having first made sure that the chunks were cut *across* the grain, adding whole vegetables for the last hour of cooking, and salt and flavours during the final ten minutes, then thickening the juices with a little flour—and you'll have a "boiled" dinner that will live in your memory.

Many who appreciate good food consider elephant trunk the most choice part of the beast, and it is, when *simmered* until tender, and spiced appetizingly. Elephant feet, cooked by ordinary methods are gooey and tasteless. They should be baked until done, the edible insides scooped out and mixed with plain gelatine, and red currant jelly, permitted to set until firm, then served with sour-sweet ostrich eggs and a patty of wild game sausage and you'll have a delightful meal that can be eaten as breakfast, lunch or dinner. Here is the recipe for

SOUR-SWEET OSTRICH EGG

2 tablespoons vinegar (any vinegar), or 1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon canned butter, or hippo lard
1 teaspoon flour, or 2 teaspoons corn meal
1 teaspoon chopped onion, or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon onion salt.

Melt butter (or lard) in frying pan, add onion, stir, add flour (or cornmeal). Cook 1 minute.

Add 6 cloves, and a dash of ginger. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for at least 10 minutes.

Now add vinegar (or lemon juice), a dash of salt, and not more than 1 tablespoon of sugar. Bring barely to boiling, and slip in 1 whole ostrich egg (or 12 hen's eggs), cover and poach.

How to Cook a Crocodile

WILD GAME SAUSAGE

This recipe was given me by a Basuto, named Amalita, who cooked for Nicobar Jones for thirty years. On expeditions, Jones and I did our own cooking, but Amalita lorded it in the kitchen of Jones's home. Amalita's wild game cookery delighted such gourmet guests as L. Sam Marks, millionaire traveller who lived only to eat; Anders van der Wall, who burst and died after a prolonged Christmas dinner in Johannesburg; and the German, Gotthelf Kiessling, whose taste buds were so developed that he could detect and identify any one of thirty-six spices in foods even when only a few grains of each had been used.

This sausage recipe of Amalita's doesn't seem much different from that of the pork sausage of farm wives, but it differs significantly in proportion of fat to lean, and has been made less harsh by the use of savory instead of sage.

Cut 40 pounds of hippo, rhino, wild pig, wart hog, or aardvark into small pieces. Add ten pounds of fat, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar, 1 tablespoon ginger, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pepper, 1 pound salt, 1 tablespoon oregano, 3 tablespoons savory. Mix all together, and put through meat grinder three times. Pack into a sterilized stone jar and cover with a heavy layer of hippo lard or other fat. Keep cool.

To cook, fry in *boiling* grease until brown and crisp on both sides. Or, place sausage patties in pan, cover with water and keep just at boiling point until the water has evaporated. Then brown in the grease that remains in the pan. Or, if you have canned butter, brown in that.

For stuffing fowls such as bustard, young ostrich, guinea hen, wild geese, flamingo, and other meaty birds, mix the sausage with an equal amount of cornmeal mush, or mashed potatoes, and pack tightly inside bird. Roast the fowl slowly.

On "rocking chair" safaris where eating and drinking is

African Adventures

sometimes more important than hunting, we often served curried dishes with the sausage-stuffed fowl.

Curry! Good curry! Honest curry! The delight of potentates, and the joy of men with good appetite! It puts soul into meat, and exalts the spirits of those who appreciate life's better gifts.

But be warned against the wishy-washy, uninspired concoction called curry in most homes and restaurants of Europe and America. Such curry is a byword and a hissing.

Genuine curry powder should be as much part of a hunting safari as guns and ammunition. It is easy to make. Keep proportions exact, and treasure the finished product.

CURRY POWDER

20	ounces caraway seed
2	pounds pale tumeric seed
$\frac{1}{2}$	pound <i>Jamaica</i> ginger
$\frac{1}{2}$	pound cumin seed
1	pound corriander seed
$\frac{1}{2}$	ounce cardamon seed
4	ounces cayenne pepper
$\frac{1}{2}$	pound black pepper.

Powder ingredients well in a mortar. Dry the mixture beside fire, or in warm sunlight. Bottle tightly. *Vive le roi!*

Throughout the world the two favourite curries are Indian and Malay, but in Africa's interior, shrimps for the Malay curry are expensive, if one can obtain them at all. I've cooked Indian curry for hunters of all nations and never yet has one not demanded a second helping.

I made Indian curry with whatever meat was handy, preferring buffalo, sable, duikerbok, nyala, steinbok, zebra and roan. Almost as good are wildebeest, wart hog, wild pig, aardvark, sitantunga, sassaby, gemsbok, springbok, lechwe and giraffe.

Jones used to enjoy curried crocodile, but I've a mild crocodile phobia, so that meat doesn't go down easily. Snake meat

How to Cook a Crocodile

is white and tasty, and when curried is more palatable than chicken. Snake meat can also be prepared as one would ordinarily prepare fowl or fish, and is excellent.

Americans on safari—particularly those from the Middle West, throw their hands up at the thought of eating any meat but mutton, veal, beef or pork. Italians, Portuguese and Spanish will eat anything. Frenchmen will eat anything so long as it doesn't taste like what it is. Germans will eat anything if it's well-cooked. Englishmen, dismayed at having to eat lion, for instance, do so, but make the experience a lark. Norwegians, Swedes and Danes eat what they must without fuss, but also, without fervour. Greeks and Russians eat anything with ecstasy, and are always hungry.

I once guided a man named William P. Perkins, a Texan, who cooked steaks into something resembling shoe soles. He shot a sable antelope, hacked out steaks and fried them until they were about as chewable as the beast's hide would have been—then began a tirade about antelope steaks.

That night I cut a thick steak off the rump, lightly pricked both sides all over with a fork, rubbed salt and pepper in thoroughly, got the frying pan piping hot, poured in vegetable oil, let it sizzle a minute, dropped the steak in, turned it every minute for five minutes, dusted it with just a breath of garlic salt, let it cook another five minutes, turning it once, put it on a plate and handed Perkins a fork and a well-sharpened knife.

Perkins took a bite, chewed a couple of times, said:

“This ain’t no Texas longhorn.”

He ate the big steak without another word, then asked:

“What the hell did you do to that steak?”

“Sealed the juices in, seasoned it and fried it in sizzling fat.”

“But you pricked the steak with a fork. That lets juices out.”

“Not if you rub the steak well with salt and pepper. They plug the fork-holes and keep the juices inside.”

African Adventures

"Could skinny Texas cattle be cooked like that?"

"Sure. Prick the steak well with a fork, rub in melted suet, salt and pepper, fry quickly in boiling fat—never cook a lean steak in a dry pan—turn the steak frequently, and serve rare, medium-rare, or medium—not well-done. Remember that the slower a steak's fried, the tougher it will be. Never let a steak get done on one side before turning.

"Broiling over clean, hot coals makes a tastier steak than does frying. Pricking, salting and peppering—and for too-lean steaks, sueting—is the same for broiling as for frying. But pricking will ruin a steak unless the pan or coals are *hot*."

"How about hanging meat?"

"Most meat is better for hanging, but duikerbok, sable, klipspringer and nyala are excellent-eating when fresh-killed. Don't hang crocodile, snake, wild pig, wart hog, water or monitor lizard if you want them tasty. Hanging makes a big improvement in lion, leopard, most antelopes, elephant, rhino, hippo and buffalo."

Prime carcasses, particularly those of deer and antelope, are often ruined for eating by carelessness. For instance: Wind-pipes must be removed, and the animal bled *at once*, if meat is not to turn sour. Skin should be taken off as soon as possible. The underside of a carcass that is left on the ground quickly becomes tainted. Flies won't bother a carcass hung twenty feet up, or higher.

Make all cuts *across* the grain of the meat. Grain of the rump runs at an angle; grain of the round, straight across. Never *saw* the meat with the knife. Sawing the blade back and forth toughens ends of the fibres. And always before cooking, wipe all game with a damp cloth. Pollen, dust and dried blood ruin the flavour of meat.

Don't split the backbone of small animals.

Give your natives the shanks, brisket, flank, neck and side

How to Cook a Crocodile

ribs—leaving the choice pieces—round, rump, loin, shoulder and prime rib roasts—for your party.

Boiling, frying or broiling, when done with knowledge of the needs of various types of game, make palatable dishes. But it is baking—slow, even prolonged, baking—that brings out wild meats' most delectable qualities.

Meat may be baked in a Dutch oven set among hot coals, or hung over a flame. But for sheer savouriness and tenderness, wrap a roast in dampened leaves or grass, then encase in a cocoon of clay. Put oven-hot rocks on the bottom of a hole in the ground and place the cocoon on the rocks. Cover it with other oven-hot stones. Fill in the hole and permit the meat to remain for twenty-four hours. Appropriate herbs may be wrapped with the grass or leaves.

Seat your guests beside the camp fire. Dig up the roast. Go a little way up-wind, crack the clay from the meat and peel off grasses and leaves. The appetizing odour will drift down-wind and you'll be repaid for your trouble when you see the eager sniffings and the sparkle in the eyes of your guests.

Then there's barbecued game, which, like corn-on-the-cob, is appreciated chiefly by Americans. Two desires are uppermost in the minds of most Americans when they first go hunting. One is to shoot a rifle merely to be shooting. The other is to eat barbecued antelope.

Here is a simple barbecue sauce that comes straight from a hunting client named Worthington, who had been a member of the kitchen staff of a famous hotel in Tennessee. This sauce is good with all antelope meats, but is particularly effective with flavourless-fleshed reedbuck.

BARBECUE SAUCE TENNESSEE

1 cup vinegar

2 heaping tablespoons chopped sour pickle

African Adventures

3 cup butter
2 tablespoons chopped onion, or **2** teaspoons onion salt
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1 teaspoon brown (or burnt white) sugar.

Mix all ingredients together and cook only until butter has melted. Keep warm, and serve with broiled, fried or baked meat. (Note: Europeans prefer that this sauce be made with browned butter.)

- There isn't room in this book for the numerous safari-tested wild game recipes I've collected, but here are a few of the best:

BUFFALO POT ROAST (Recipe by L. Sam Marks)

Cut a 20-pound buffalo rump across the grain. Bone. Thread a strip of salt pork through the meat, or rub well with salted hippo lard. Marinate in vinegar-water, lemon-water, or any red wine, for 24 hours. Dry with cloth, reserving marinade. Brown meat quickly and put in Dutch oven. Pour marinade over it. Add herbs to taste. Cover and cook slowly for about 6 hours. Lift out meat. Strain off fat. Slice meat and pour flour-thickened gravy over it. Serve with boiled vegetables and hot cakes.

BRAISED BUFFALO TONGUE (Speciality of Anders van der Wall)

Trim cartilage from tongue. Put tongue in saucepan with water to cover. Add **1** grated onion, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon powdered cloves, salt, black pepper and a dash of vinegar or lemon juice. Simmer for 3 hours. Skin and slice tongue. Serve with mashed potatoes, pickles and sliced, raw onions.

ELAND STEAKS (Speciality of Amalita, Jones's Basuto cook, and equally delightful for Sable, Zebra or Wildebeest steaks)

How to Cook a Crocodile

Cut a thick rump steak. Slash one side in criss-cross fashion with a sharp knife. Rub grated horseradish into slashes. Dunk steak in oil or melted butter. Fry (or broil) quickly, turning frequently until half done. Serve with fried onions and canned sour cherries.

A sauce that goes astonishingly well with potatoes baked in coals, and as gravy for fried cornmeal (mealie meal) mush, was concocted by Nicobar Jones when a wealthy client of his demanded something different. Here it is:

HIPPO HAM SAUCE

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound hippo ham
4 tablespoons grated onion, or 2 teaspoons onion salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
dash of powdered clove
dash of ginger
4 tablespoons vinegar, or 2 tablespoons lemon juice
4 tablespoons flour (white, graham or pancake)
3 cups brewed tea.

Cut hippo ham into small pieces. Fry. Add onions, cut fine, and fry for only one or two minutes with the ham. Add flour and tea. Stir in clove, ginger, vinegar (or lemon juice), and pepper. Cook 12 minutes.

Smoked hams from young hippo are one of the world's great delicacies, according to L. Sam Marks. Here is his recipe:

SMOKED HIPPO HAMS

To the fleshy side of a 120-pound hippo ham apply 4 tablespoons saltpetre and $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds brown sugar, rubbing well into the hock. Now lay ham on its side, fleshy side up, in a wooden tub or cask and cover with a 1-inch layer of good salt. Cover and set away for 6 weeks. Rub off salt, and rub in black pepper. Hang up and let drain for 8 days. Smoke with any green wood for 10 weeks. Cool. Return to tub and cover with salt mixed

African Adventures

with 1 ounce saltpetre. After 6 days put ham in *strong* brine to which has been added 2 ounces each of saffron, ginger, rosemary, cummin, and 4 ounces of cloves. Soak in this brine for 7 weeks, hang up, drain well, rub with pepper and smoke again with green wood.

Note: Rhino, wild pig and wart-hog hams cured according to the foregoing recipe are equally delicious.

BAKED HIPPO HAM (Marks)

These famous Marks recipes are now used all over the world for ordinary pork hams.

Simmer a 120-pound ham for 24 hours. Remove skin. Punch ham full of pencil-size holes. Pour 1 gallon of champagne over ham, filling as many of the holes as possible. Place ham in suitable pan and rub well with mixture of ginger, flour and powdered white sugar. Bake in moderate (375 degree) baker's oven for 10 hours. *Do not baste.*

Note: In cooking a 15-pound *pork* ham, simmer only 3 hours, use only 1 quart of champagne, and bake for 2 hours.

GROUNDNUT HIPPO HAM

Cut $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick slices of ham. Grind groundnuts (peanuts) fine, and mix into a paste with melted, browned butter. Rub ham slices lightly with ginger, sprinkle with ginger ale, and spread with groundnut-butter. Bake in moderate oven. Serve with honey-toast, plain pineapple slices, and a glass of good sherry.

The following simple method of cooking python filets is also excellent for viper and cobra:

Put two 15-inch sections of python in baking pan. Brown 1 pound canned butter (or margarine) and pour over the filets. Dust with onion salt, and sprinkle with lemon juice. Bake

How to Cook a Crocodile

slowly until tender, basting frequently with the butter. Serve with boiled greens.

While the foregoing recipe for snake meats makes a tasty dish, gourmets prefer this more fanciful one:

PYTHON, YARBROUGH

Cut 4 pounds of filet from a young python, dip in flour mixed with salt, pepper and ginger. Melt 1 pound butter in 2 quarts of cream (6 cups evaporated milk and 2 cups water), and add 2 cups sherry wine. Add filets and simmer until meat is done. Make a sauce with cream and mushrooms. Serve with canned corn (tinned maize), and a green vegetable.

I have found that the legs of crocodile are best-eating, but steaks from shoulders are popular. In preparing crocodile for cooking, be careful to stay away from the neck, which has offensive musk glands on each side.

CROCODILE A LA F. ROBINSON

Cut thin slices of crocodile meat, preferably from a front leg. Add salt, ginger and sweet red wine to some brown sauce. Broil or fry the slices of meat and pour the sauce over them. Sprinkle with grated cheese and dot with butter. Bake in a fast oven until browned. Serve with sautéed giant sliced mushrooms, fried rice and chili sauce.

Many African game recipes call for mushrooms because they are available in season almost everywhere on the plains and in the forests. White mushrooms of eastern Angola and southwest Congo often grow to four pounds. In forests of central Africa, hundreds of pounds of "shell" mushrooms (almost identical with the American sulphur-shelf mushroom) can sometimes be gathered from one log. Pick the younger ones—they're tender, and taste like a dream when cooked in butter

African Adventures

and canned milk. Then there's a golden-yellow woods mushroom, called the chanterelle—an apricot-flavoured, delicate-textured delight. On the plains abound meadow-mushrooms of many types.

Mushrooms have affinity with butter and cream, but can be overpowered by spices. They may be baked, boiled, fried or pickled. Cut fine and added to pancake batter, mushrooms make a delicious dish. Creamed *biltong* (sun-dried meat) with mushrooms stewed in evaporated milk is a satisfying meal. With boiled noodles, stewed mushrooms add vitamins and *elan*. Incidentally, mushrooms are so nutritious that one can live on them exclusively for days, and remain full of verve.

Four men eat breakfast at five o'clock. Two eat meat, and little else. The other two eat cereals, fruits and starches. At lunch time the meat-eaters will still be going strong. The other two will have been yammering for a snack since ten o'clock. But, if one is to live on nothing but meat, the meat must contain at least twenty-five per cent fat. That's why in game cooking, one should "lard" well. Most wild game is lean.

Lion meat does not take kindly to ordinary methods of cooking, but properly stewed, is equal to hare, rabbit, muskrat or cat.

JUGGED LION, OMOHUNDRO

Skin and clean a young lion, preferably one about six months old. Save 1 cup of blood and add 1 cup of vinegar to it. Cut meat into stew-size pieces and mix with uncooked onions and celery. Pour wine (any kind) over the mixture and let stand for at least 12 hours, stirring occasionally. Drain. Season with salt and pepper. Put all together again in more wine with favourite spices. A spot of garlic goes well, too. Cook until fat rises. Skim. Bake until done, then add blood-vinegar and take from heat without further cooking. Serve with stewed mushrooms and boiled onions.

How to Cook a Crocodile

There are times when small hunting parties find themselves without large game. Be not dismayed. Take your .22s and go out after small birds, mice and squirrels. Use the following recipe and you'll be as well-fed as if you'd eaten buffalo.

SMALL GAME KICKSHAW

Clean and split in half 36 small birds, squirrels, field mice, or an assortment of all of them. Boil in plenty of water and skim. Add salt, pepper, cloves and onions. Simmer until tender, in water to cover. Take from fire and bone. Put a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch layer of mealie (cornmeal) mush in a baking pan. Now a layer of meat. Another layer of mush, and so on, topping with mush. You won't, as a rule, need to add fat to this kickshaw, as mice are usually plump little rascals.

Peoples' attitudes towards foods are curious. Persons who shudder at the thought of eating mice will dig a spoon into the backside of a lobster and eat with gusto. Field mice are clean, wholesome little beasts, and very tasty. Many persons who think snowbirds and songbirds a great treat when baked-in-a-pie, desert them entirely after they've tasted a well-cooked mouse pastry.

Everywhere in Africa are frogs—red frogs, yellow frogs, spotted frogs, giant frogs and little hop-toads. All frogs are good-eating, particularly their hind legs. They're meaty. African frogs have probably saved the lives of more lost and starving men than has any other food. Any chicken recipe is satisfactory for frog legs. Here is the easiest:

FROG LEGS, UGANDA

Fry fresh frog legs in butter. Add salt and pepper while cooking. Sprinkle with lemon juice or water vinegar. Place on warm plate and drench with browned butter. Serve with mushrooms, tomatoes (if at hand), and any of Africa's many types of squash,

African Adventures

baked or boiled. *Note:* Many safari kitchens are stocked with vegetable purées. Best of all with frog legs is tomato hot sauce.

Liver, be it lion, elephant or antelope, is probably the most popular meat among old-time professional hunters. Liver is best eaten shortly after the kill. It should be cooked slowly—either broiled on a stick or fried in a not-too-hot pan. It mates well with hippo ham, pork bacon or even hippo lard. Made into a paste, it once went everywhere with lonely old hunters and prospectors.

LIVER PASTE

Use any liver, preferably sable, buffalo, eland, duikerbok, springbok, lion or zebra. Add an equal amount of fat meat (or lean meat and suet), and simmer long in a thin gravy of butter, flour and milk. Drain and crush the mixture through a sieve. Add onion salt, and the yolk of 1 ostrich egg (or yolks of 12 hen's eggs) for each 18 pounds of mixture. Add salt, pepper, powdered cloves. Beat and add the egg white. Add what's left of the original gravy, and bake from 2 to 3 hours in a moist oven, or in a pan set in another containing water. Do not skim off fat—the paste will take it all up again. Let cool until it sets—18 hours or more. Serve with anything and everything.

Liking for horsemeat among Oregonians is said to amount to a passion. Mary Cullen, food editor of *Oregon Journal*, is the cause of it all, for she's America's leading authority on the cooking of horse. One wonders what Miss Cullen could do with zebra, which is superior in almost every respect to Oregon horse. The following recipe is excellent for horse as well as for zebra.

ZEBRA STEAKS *Sans Souci* (probably the world's tastiest steak)

Cut steaks off filet, or rump *across* grain. Pound well with meat pounder. Sprinkle with garlic salt, onion salt, salt, pepper.

How to Cook a Crocodile

Pound seasonings into meat. Steaks will be thin and flat. Push them together so they become thick. Put a lump of suet on each one (or butter), and broil as for beef. Serve well-buttered.

ZEBRA PATTIES

(Note: Wealthy Somalis consider this dish an aphrodisiac.)

Grind zebra filet or roast, into hamburger. Put in large bowl and mix with evaporated milk. Use hands for mixing, and continue until the meat will absorb no more milk. Season and make into patties. Flour. Fry in hot grease (suet is possible), and watch out for scorching. Serve well-buttered, with tomatoes, bread and fried mashed potatoes.

African animals aren't noted for the size of their brains. The elephant's averages only eleven pounds. But there isn't an animal whose brains are not delicious when prepared as follows:

WILD GAME BRAINS

Simmer brains for 6 or 7 minutes, drain and remove skin and blood vessels. Slice into pieces for frying. Season with salt and pepper. Dip in slightly-beaten egg (or in evaporated milk), and in cracker, fine bread-crumbs, or corn meal. Fry golden in butter. Serve with fried eggs and lemon-butter sauce.

BRAIN HASH

(quantities don't matter in this recipe)

Cut brains into small pieces and mix with any chopped, cooked vegetables on hand. Add, if you like, any meat left-overs, chopped small. Add a slightly-beaten egg or two, and form into flat, round cakes, or roll into balls. Fry in deep fat at 375 degrees for 3 to 5 minutes. Or pan-fry in sizzling grease or oil. Serve with cheese, any green vegetable, and mashed, well-buttered squash (marrow).

The foregoing wild game recipes are chiefly for safaris with

African Adventures

well-equipped kitchen and pantry. For those who hunt and "live off the country", the recipes are good without the frills. If there's no milk, use water. If there's no butter, use rendered fat from any animal or fowl. If there are no spices, there will at least be pepper and salt. Nutritious soups can be made anywhere at any time from whatever greens, wild vegetables and game that happens to be at hand. A soup that really stays with you is made from groundnuts (peanuts), available almost everywhere in Africa. Use chopped groundnuts instead of meat, or use both.

Some people turn up their noses at wild game dishes, failing to realize that, as Nicobar Jones used to say: "Proteins are proteins." The human body requires proteins, and does not differentiate between proteins of elephant, snake, frog, grasshopper, antelope or corn-fed steer. All proteins go to repair tissue waste. On safari, meat-eaters get hungry less frequently than vegetarians, and stand up better when going is tough.

More and more African hunting parties are going in for popcorn. This is because an American named Ralph Luick developed a method of popping popcorn that puts it among the really interesting foods.

POPCORN, LUICK

Note: It is important that the kernels be perfectly dry. The slightest moisture results in a mediocre product.

Melt $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of butter (no substitute) in a 6 or 8 quart kettle. When the butter boils, it will foam. Stir the butter to keep from burning, until foam subsides. (The foam is water that is boiling out of the butter.) When the butter begins to brown, pour in 1 cup of popcorn kernels. Stir as more foam appears (water boiling out of the kernels, this time). As this second foam subsides, the corn will begin to pop. Put lid on kettle and shake vigorously. Within seconds, the corn will pop like mad, and in less than a minute, the kettle will be filled with

How to Cook a Crocodile

puffy, white, butter-soaked jewels. No additional salt required. Never was popcorn like this! It won't dry out, develops no "oil skin", and actually melts in the mouth.

Britons and Germans have taken to eating *Popcorn, Luick* as a breakfast cereal. Eaten with cream and sugar, it makes ordinary patented breakfast foods seem mediocre indeed.

Some not-too-far-off day, canned and potted African big and small game will be sold all over the world. For some time, several Americans and Englishmen have been surveying the possibilities of such a venture, and are getting interested co-operation from Portuguese, Belgian and French authorities.

Two cans of zebra fillets, please!

*THE MAN WHO FEARED
SPIDERS*

MONTANO'S CAMP REQUIRED ABOUT three hundred pounds of meat a day. Sixty porters ate almost that much at a meal, when they could get it. Ubusuku and I, skunked for hours, found hartebeest spoor just as we were about to give up. We'd had several chances at duikerbok, but shooting those little forty-pounders in knee-high grass is like shooting at rabbits. We'd need seven or eight of them, and the way they were diving into cover made that impossible.

The sun was in the last quarter of the sky when we came within sight of a three hundred and fifty pound hartebeest bull. Keeping ant-hills between us and him we managed to get within one hundred yards when he flipped his ears, raised his horse-like head, whirled and loped away. He hadn't seen us, so I knew something else had frightened him.

Grumbling at bad luck, I kept my eyes up-wind expecting to see a lion. Instead, a white man, followed by two heavily-laden natives, pushed out from behind a brush screen. He saw us, held up one hand, switched a load he was carrying to the other shoulder and came on. He was a short, wiry individual with a face so dusty and sweat-streaked that his teeth gleamed like those of a black-skinned Somali.

"Doctor Livingstone, I presume," he said with a grin.

It was Miki Carter, of California. I'd met him in Johannesburg shortly before starting out with Carrie, Davis and Ayl-

The Man Who Feared Spiders

cough—an adventurous cameraman who made the world his beat. He set down his load of cameras, and said:

“I went to Kindu. You didn’t show up there.” •

“No. We’re going tomorrow.”

“Don’t tell me your tracker’s already won that bet,” Miki said in consternation. “I didn’t hear about it until after you’d gone. I’ve had one hell of a time locating you. By God, if your native’s lone-handled all those animals already, he’ll just have to do it all over again. I want pictures.”

“How’d you find us? No one knows we’re here.”

“I’m with a white hunter—fellow named Manoli Fangoudis. Natives call him *Bwana* Manoli. We stopped at a village this side of Kindu and Manoli told the chief he wanted to find you. They got the drums going, or something, and next morning, told us you were camped near the Ulindi towards Kama.”

“I know Manoli. Where is he?”

“A hartebeest came hot-footing past us, and he went after him.”

“Manoli’s from Kabale, Uganda. Good man. Likes to spear big game instead of shooting . . .” The report of a 9.3 mm. Mauser crashed across the plain. “He’s got our hartebeest,” I said, then nodded to Ubusuku and added: “Take *Baas* Carter’s Mangbetus to carry the meat.”

“No,” Miki said, “Manoli’s got three Mangbetus with him. He’ll be here pretty soon.”

But Manoli hadn’t got the hartebeest—he’d shot a buffalo cow. He came towards us followed by his natives, the leading one carrying the buffalo’s head atop his own.

Manoli is a big, well-proportioned African-born Greek who has been spearing lions and buffalo single-handed since he was eighteen. He began as an ivory poacher, but when he found he could barely make expenses, with ivory selling at two dollars

African Adventures

a pound, gave it up in favour of buffalo hunting. Buffalo sold to natives for about seven dollars a carcass. Even when hunting was good, Manoli often found himself so short of cash that he couldn't buy cartridges for his 9.3 mm. Mauser. Nor could he afford to hire native hunters. So he developed a technique for spearing buffalo.

I think every old-time hunter agrees that a wounded or angry buffalo is a tougher customer than a lion. First of all, the buffalo weighs fifteen hundred pounds—three times as much as a lion. A lion with a spear in him will often forget the hunter and fight the spear. Not so a buffalo. A lion knows when he's licked, a buffalo, never.

Manoli usually used two spears on lone hunts—a wooden-shafted throwing spear, and a steel-shafted Masai spear. He would sneak up on the buffalo and throw the wooden spear into its kidneys. Kidney wounds sometimes set up a temporary paralysis, making it possible to thrust a second spear into the heart without too much risk. But sometimes the jobs didn't turn out too neatly, and Manoli would find himself involved in fast action.

The Mangbetus brought less than two hundred pounds of meat from the kill, so I sent Ubusuku and Miki's two boys to lug another couple of hundred. While we waited, I told Miki and Manoli about Carrie's decision to concede the bet.

"I've already wired Hollywood I was getting pictures of your tracker at work," Miki said. "You can't let me down."

I grinned at Manoli. He grinned back. "Miki," I said, "Manoli will put on a better act for you than Ubusuku. A native killing big game with his bare hands, so to speak, is one thing, but a white man doing it, is really something else. If Carrie wants to drop the hunt, I don't feel I should prolong it. Jones has plenty of work ahead for me—said he'd write me at Kindu."

The Man Who Feared Spiders

Miki took a letter from his hat and handed it to me. "He did write to Kindu," he said, "I picked it up for you."

Jones's note said briefly that, as soon as the Carrie show was over, I was to go to Libreville on the west coast of French Equatorial Africa, and wait there for a Dutch entomologist named Kees Jonker, who had ordered a guide.

After supper that night, Davis and Aylcough, acting as referees in the matter of the Jones-Carrie bet, agreed to Carrie's request that he be permitted to concede victory to Ubusuku, and that the matter of payment of the wager be settled by Jones and Carrie.

Months later, Jones accepted \$5000 for himself, and another \$5000 for Ubusuku's father.

Manoli agreed to spear a buffalo in front of Miki's camera. He was to make the kill by thrusting—not throwing. I was to act as gun-support.

Early next morning, five whites—Miki with his light movie-camera, Aylcough with box camera, Manoli with spear, and Carrie and I with rifles—started out to locate buffalo. Shortly after noon, we spotted a herd on a large, open, ant-hill studded, grass flat. We circled for an hour to get down-wind, then began crawling on our bellies from ant-heap to ant-heap.

We finally made it to an ant-hill about fifty yards from the edge of the herd. Here Miki kept us down while he changed lenses. When all was set, Manoli whispered to me:

"I'll creep forward to about thirty yards of that near cow. When I'm ready for action, I'll raise my spear-head. You fire three or four fast shots to confuse the herd, and try to get the herd leader with your first shot. Maybe I'll get Miki some action before they stampede."

While Manoli, dragging the spear, wriggled forward through the grass, I picked out the herd bull, estimated his distance at eighty yards and set my sights. Miki crouched behind his tripod.

African Adventures

Out of the grass about twenty yards ahead, Manoli's spear reared like a black mamba.

I fired. My first shot dropped the leader in his tracks. My second wounded a cow and she began running round crazily. The herd milled about, then began galloping in erratic, jumping circles. All was bellowing confusion for a few moments. Then a second leader took charge, and the frightened beasts wheeled after him at an angle in front of us.

My third shot clipped the new leader's horns. He ploughed to a stop, bellowed, stood shaking and tossing his head as the rest of the herd thundered past him. Manoli ran to the bull, leapt in front of him and thrust with his spear just as the bull did a half-whirl. The spear missed; Manoli stumbled. The bull backed away snorting, dug in his feet and with tail almost straight up, drove head-first at Manoli. Manoli levelled his spear, held the butt away from his left side with both hands and let the beast's rush drive the razor-sharp blade into its shoulder. I expected Manoli to run. Instead, still holding on to the spear-shaft, he was knocked to his knees, and dragged about sixty feet.

It seemed to me that Manoli's number was up.

I raised my rifle, and to get an easier shot, stepped partially in front of the camera. Miki put his foot on my backside and pushed. The shot went wild.

I had no time to call Miki names, for Manoli got to his feet and jerked hard on the spear. It was stuck between the buffalo's foreleg and shoulder-bone. The bull lifted his forefeet in a wrenching, twisting jump and again, Manoli went to his knees. He pulled himself erect by the spear handle, and hopping on one foot, wrestled to loosen the spear.

Action was so fast—the man and the animal changed places so rapidly—that I didn't dare shoot. As I ran towards the struggle, I could hear Miki shouting to me to get out of the picture.

The Man Who Feared Spiders

Suddenly one of the bull's lunges drove the blade into its lungs. He stood like a statue for a second, then with a coughing snort, sprayed Manoli with blood. The struggle began again. The spear-point was working round in the chest cavity, but it was impossible for Manoli to pull it out. He tugged, pulled and thrust. He was up and down, sometimes swung off his feet by the beast's plunging, sometimes flat on his belly—but he hung on to that spear all the while.

The bull seemed to weaken abruptly and I had a chance to shoot, but I realized that Manoli would be the victor in another minute, so I stepped back out of camera range. The bull lowered his horns for a sweep, but his strength was gone and the lowered head sank slowly until the nose rested on the ground.

Poised on one foot like a stork, Manoli thrust again. The bull moaned and crumpled, then lay quiet. Manoli fell beside him, gasping air in great, painful gulps. His whole body shook with the pounding of his heart, but little by little, the sobbing breaths quieted. Finally he lay still, eyes shut as if asleep. His hands still grasped the spear-handle.

When able to talk, Manoli said: "I think my ankle's broken." He was right—it was.

Miki, smiling smugly as he sealed film in a tin, saw me scowling at him. With a grin, he said:

"I know exactly what you're thinking—and—the same to you."

That night we really ate. I curried buffalo meat, and Miki donated two cans of green Kenya plums. Manoli came through with a tin of *IXL* berry jam from New Zealand. Davis had found some ripe, wild melons, and we had a pudding made of corn meal, liver and birds' eggs.

It was one of those nights when firelight has a touch of red in it, and flames curl and twist as if trying to get back into the

African Adventures

wood from which they came; a night when coals glow and wane, making shifting patterns of ruby and gold; a night for seeing pictures in the embers.

The fire burned low and one of the carriers piled on fresh wood. Flames leapt high and sparks exploded in little bursts. Anatole brought a four-quart kettle of tea, and, as often happened beside camp fires, I was asked to spin a yarn.

"For months on end I go—trading, hunting, foot-slogging," I said. "Usually nothing much out-of-the-ordinary happens, then comes a job that makes up in excitement and danger for all the listless months.

"I took this fellow, Jonker, that Jones wants me to meet in Libreville, up the Ogoue two years ago. That was quite a trip."

ENTOMOLOGIST KEEPS JONKER, DRINKING morning coffee at a folding camp table beneath an *okoume* tree in the Gaboon district of French Equatorial Africa, stared glassy-eyed at a green-and-yellow spider dangling eighteen inches in front of his face. His clean-shaven upper lip, and the tip of his big nose were white. The guy was scared stiff.

"The spider's harmless, Jonker," I said.

Jonker stood up, coffee slopping from his tin mug. "It doesn't matter whether they're poisonous or not—they fill me with intolerable fear," he said. "That's one reason I'm in West Africa—to whip this fear. Sometimes I think I've overcome it, then I see a spider-like creature unexpectedly, and . . ."

"I know," I said. "I've guided men with several kinds of phobias; fear of horses, fear of things falling, fear of dead bodies, and several who feared blood."

The spider hanging over the table suddenly squirted silk from its spinnerets and plummeted to the table-top. Jonker crushed it with the end of a stick—and shuddered. I said:

"Your fear seems so great, Jonker, that I think this trip may

The Man Who Feared Spiders

be a mistake. Rains have been heavy. The lowlands where we plan to go are teeming with fearsome small things. Shall we call it off?"

"No," he replied. "If this phobia stops me now, I'll never cure it."

Jonker was a two hundred pounder with all the courage in the world—until it came to spiders. He'd become an entomologist partly in defiance of his fear.

"Okay," I said. "We'll start up-river tomorrow."

I shouldered my rifle and set out, hoping to find a young antelope or maybe a red buffalo calf, for supper. There was plenty of game in the clearings, but I couldn't get near it. I prowled for miles and finally settled for a yearling hippo. When I got back to camp, dusk was falling. I sent my head boy, Lagone, and his nine Bakole porters, to bring in the meat, then sat by the fire and watched Jonker finish putting up a white canvas insect trap. The canvas was a six by nine sheet that Jonker erected like a sail. When firelight played upon it, the thing became sort of luminescent, and insects came from all directions to cling to it.

Jonker and I ate hippo liver for supper, drank a lot of tea, lit our pipes and watched insects and beetles bang into the canvas "sail". From time to time, he sprayed the insects with a solution and they'd fall to the ground at the bottom of the trap. Jonker sorted them out with his fingers, bottling those he wanted.

The night grew black and the firelight threw shuffling shadows round us. At one bottom corner of the trap, my eye caught a quicker, more solid shadow. It darted at the little pile of dead insects, then vanished. I stared for several minutes without seeing the dark movement again and had decided the light was playing tricks on me, when it appeared once more for a brief instant.

I stepped round the canvas trap, and stopped suddenly.

African Adventures

Squatting within a yard was one of the most devilish-looking animals in Africa—a whip scorpion. I have no phobias, but large whip-scorpions (*Amblypygi*) give me the creeps. The little beasts look like something out of hell—and stink. A man who fears spider-like creatures usually goes into dithering panic when he sees a whip-scorpion.

The unholy things have segmented, flat bodies about the size of a poker chip. They have eight true legs, four to a side. The back three pairs bend forward and upward at the joints so that the vicious little animal seems always about to spring. These three pairs of legs are about twelve times longer than the body is wide—spreading ten to eleven inches. The front pair of true legs aren't legs at all, but string-like "whips", twenty-five to thirty inches in length. The whips writhe and twist in all directions until they touch an insect, whereupon the scorpion pounces so fast that the eye can barely follow it. The victim is clasped in a pair of "jaw-legs", twice as long as the true legs, and armed with cruel fangs along their inner edges. The whip-scorpion's prey never escapes, but is held in the "toothed" embrace until the scorpion sucks the body dry.

Jonker, fumbling for an insect, reached round the edge of the canvas. The scorpion leapt. The spiked jaw-legs wrapped round Jonker's fingers. Jonker jerked his hand away but the scorpion clung on, squawking like a stricken parrot. Jonker at last shook the beast off, then fell to his hands and knees.

I tried to help him up, but his legs buckled and he knelt, head down, every muscle twitching.

"You're suffering from shock, Jonker," I said. "Lie down and I'll cover you with blankets."

He didn't seem to hear me so I pushed him over on his back, put two blankets over him and sat watching while the shaking slowly subsided. An hour later, he said:

"What was it?"

The Man Who Feared Spiders

“A whip-scorpion.”

“It bit me.”

“They’re not poisonous.”

He sighed and sat up, threw the blankets aside, said: “I’m warm again,” then, bitterly: “This is no place for me—I’m not even half a man.”

“Look, Jonker,” I said. “Beat that fear. Next time you see a whip-scorpion, pick it up.”

“By God I’ll do it,” he declared vehemently.

I planned to take Jonker to a little sandy valley up one of the tributaries of the Ogooue. At this time of year the place would be swarming with frogs, toads, shrews, landcrabs, scorpions, centipedes, wasps, spiders and all manner of worms. Next morning I said:

“You’re a pretty sick man, Jonker, when your phobia acts up. I’d like to see you whip it, but . . .”

“Please,” he protested. “My mind’s made up. I’m scared to death, but I’m in the mood to see the thing through. Don’t say anything to make me weaken.”

I told Lagone that Jonker and I would go up the left bank of the river. “Break camp,” I said, “and follow us.” We stuck around until the porters started making up the loads, then Jonker and I set out up the red-watered Ogooue. We were heading into a situation where Death was to dust our feathers—but we didn’t know that at the time.

The undergrowth was dense close to the river bank so we cut north through the trees about a half-mile where going was easier. This was great country for a zoologist; a country of giant squirrels, snakes, small antelope, okapis, red buffalo, lemurs, occasional leopards. But Jonker concentrated on butterflies, mosquitoes, wasps, bees, ants and all manner of small creatures. On his back hung a square wooden box packed with small, wide-mouthed bottles. In his pockets were tweezers, long

African Adventures

needles, tiny scoops and shovels. He was big, brawny and active, and the pink butterfly net held in one hairy hand seemed grotesquely out of character.

It was slow going, for Jonker continually stopped to turn over logs and rocks in his search for insects. Occasionally he'd pop one into a bottle. He studied spiders, too—particularly those that drape sheets of web over bushes.

"You know," he said, "I've lain every day for months, on psychoanalysts' couches, trying to find some childhood association that might account for my fears of spiders, but there seems no reasonable explanation of it. When a spider touches me, my heart pounds, and I sweat. If I hold one in my hand for more than a couple of seconds, I vomit."

We hit the tributary on the third day and followed it north-east. Small streams danced down gentle slopes on both sides of the branch. Springs bubbled from soggy ground. Tall trees were oddly interspersed with short ones, and most trunks were entangled with rubber vines. Mosquitoes dive-bombed us, while gnats flew into our ears, up our nostrils and into our mouths. They caused so much misery that we might have turned back had they not suddenly vanished as if blown away by a strong wind.

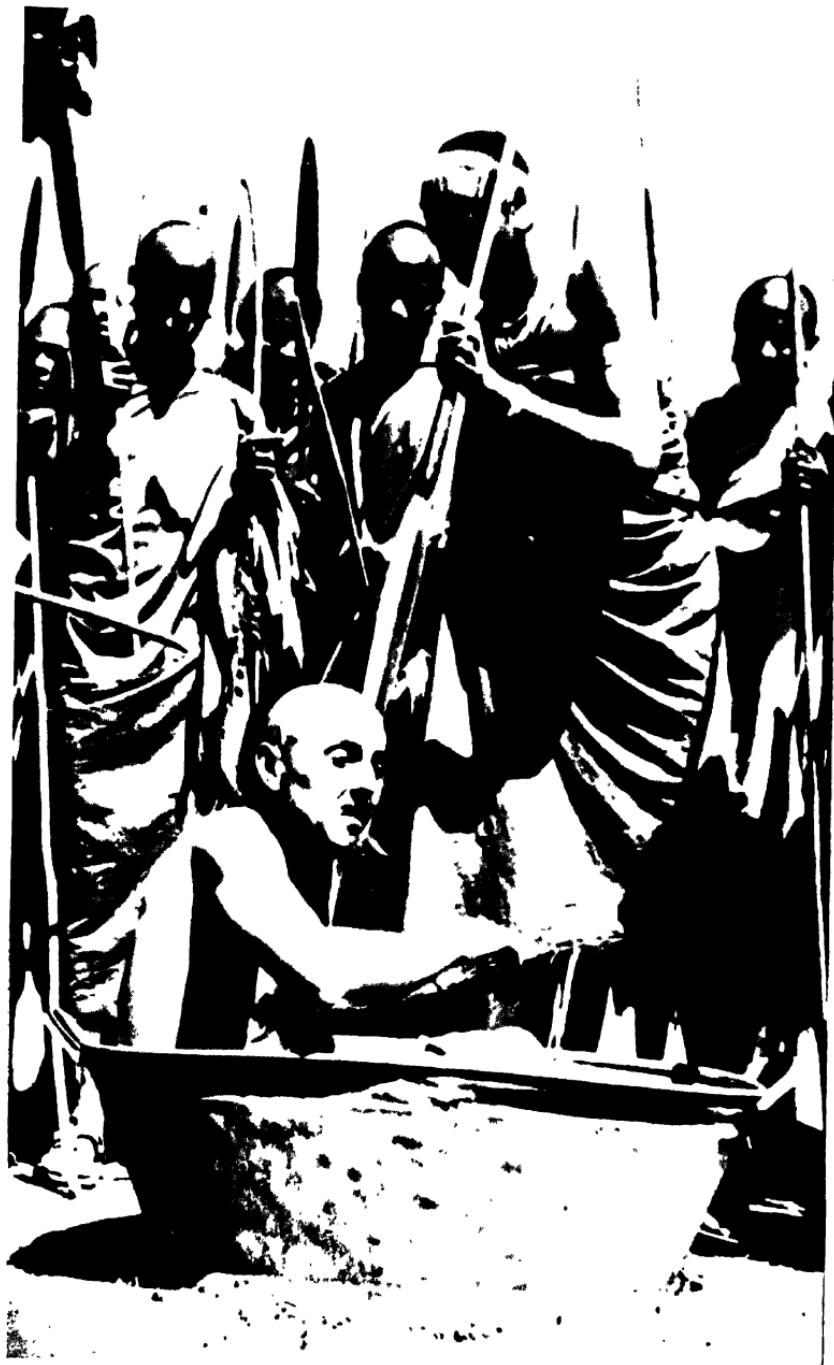
Shortly before sunset, from the top of a low, treeless hill, we looked down into our little valley. Where once had been a firm, sandy floor, was now a lake that shone like molten copper in the dying light. Coarse grasses grew to the edge of the water, but trees and bushes seemed to have drawn back as if fearful of seeing their reflections.

We chose a camp site at the edge of the trees, then I walked round the lake, looking for streams that fed it. But there was none, so I knew the lake for what it was—a sheet of water overlying quicksand.

I remembered unpleasant experiences with quicksand. Such



A furiously angry lion—note the glowing eyes—swishes his tail and snarls within five yards of Carter's camera. The photographic crew had to withdraw slowly in absolute silence.



Hector Acebas, Miki Carter's assistant, has difficulties taking a bath.

The Man Who Feared Spiders

death traps are created by run-off water that's gone underground, then forced upwards through normally-firm sand, making the sand loose and treacherous.

I went back to where Jonker and the natives were making camp, and said:

"That water's only about two inches deep, and it covers the most deadly form of quicksand. Everyone is to stay away from it—don't even put one foot in it."

The Kaffirs drew aside, talked together for several minutes, then Lagone said:

"Pay us, Master, and we will go."

"It's only quicksand, Lagone," I said. "It can't hurt you if you stay away from it."

"We must go, Master."

"Why?"

"If we do not go away, a devil-voice will call and call until we plunge into the evil waters."

I laughed, reassured Lagone, refused to pay them off and told them to talk no more about their devil. They built a fire and sat round it in silence. Jonker and I curled up beside our own fire, and slept.

In the morning, Lagone and his porters were gone.

"I'll stick around a couple of days, Jonker," I said, "and if they don't come back, I'll go down-river and pick up a gang of Bakotos. Bakotos aren't so superstitious."

I went hunting, leaving Jonker in camp to set up his insect trap and to fiddle with his specimens. I walked all day and never once got within shooting distance of a supper. Back at camp I switched my .303 for a .22 and returned to the woods looking for squirrels. I got two big fellows, skinned and cleaned them where they fell, then pushed back to camp again. I broiled the squirrels on a stick, put them on tin plates, and looked up to see Jonker studying something on the ground.

African Adventures

“Some sort of spoor,” he said.

I examined the tracks. They were those of a brush-tailed porcupine. I followed the spoor with my eyes, saw that it entered a large, cave-like hollow beneath a nearby silk-cotton tree, and made a mental note to try to capture the beast alive next day.

As the night grew darker I piled brush on the fire. The insect trap glowed warmly in the firelight. Beetles crashed into it and fell stunned at its base. And, exactly as had happened four nights before, a whip-scorpion shuffled close, grabbed a beetle and darted towards the cave where the brush-tail had holed-up.

“Jonker,” I asked, “what do you plan to do when you see another whip-scorpion?”

He looked up from the kit of bottles and said:

“Pick it up—I guess.”

“Don’t you know for sure?”

“Yes. I’ll pick it up.”

“Okay,” I said, “the time has come. There’s a whip-scorpion in the hollow under that tree. Go in and get it.”

Jonker looked at his hands. He wove his fingers together and murmured: “Sure. Tomorrow.”

“No, now,” I said.

“Now?”

“Yes, now.”

“Give me a little time,” he said, and walked away. He was back in a few minutes, carrying a pair of goggles. “I’m not going to crawl in that hole without goggles,” he said. “The bloody thing might . . .”

“Goggles are okay,” I said.

Jonker’s goggles were held snugly round the head with a wide elastic band. He held his hands before him, looked carefully at them, shook his head, then picking up a flashlight, he

The Man Who Feared Spiders

turned the beam on the mouth of the big hollow and strode towards it stiff-legged. He lay on his belly and crawled into the opening, only his feet being visible when his light went out. There was a moment of silence, and then came a scream that prickled my skin. Jonker backed out, and rushed blindly into the sail-like insect trap. He staggered to his feet and still screaming, headed towards the fire.

I grabbed him, then almost screamed, myself. A great, hairy, ten-inch West-African giant spider was clinging to Jonker's face. Jonker pawed at it, madly but it clung on. He jerked himself loose from me, grabbed the spider with both hands, and pulled. The beast came away in his hands—all but one leg that was caught under the head-band of the goggles. I reached for the spider-leg, but as I did so Jonker ducked and ran blindly—toward the quicksand.

I grabbed up my flashlight and followed, yelling to him to stop.

At the edge of the quicksand I held the light beam on him. He was already thirty feet out. Standing erect, his back to me, he was still fighting the spider-leg. The water was almost to his knees.

“Lie flat on your back, Jonker,” I yelled. “Lie down! Damn it—lie down!”

He half-turned towards me and I saw him hurl the spider-leg away.

“Lie down, Jonker!” I shouted again. “Lie on your back and spread your arms wide!” He shouted back:

“I held that leg in my hands. Did you see?”

“To hell with the leg,” I cried. “Are you sane now?”

“I’m all right, just shaking.”

“Stop shaking,” I said, “or you’ll shake yourself down to the bottom of the sand trap. Lie down on your back. Spread your arms. Lie perfectly still.”

African Adventures

Jonker threw himself backwards so hard that water splashed round him in sheets. Angrily, I shouted:

“Don’t make another move. Don’t talk. Just listen to me. Don’t try to pull your legs out of the sand. Don’t . . .”

Then he yelled something.

“Shut up,” I cried. “I can get you out if you’ll do exactly as you’re told. When I ask you a question, just answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Are you over your fright?”

“Something’s happened to me—I’m not even nervous.”

“Have you had experience with quicksand? Yes or no.”

“No.”

“Will you panic if you start sinking deeper?”

“Nothing will ever frighten me again.”

“Are you sinking now?”

“A little, maybe—not much.”

“If you’re sinking, it’s because you’re talking. Stick to yes or no. There’s no reason to panic. Remember that *if you can float in water, you can float in quicksand*. Keep your arms spread wide. Don’t move at all. Keep your chest up, and filled with air. Forget your legs. I’ll tell you when to try to pull them out. I’m going back to get a rope. You all right?”

“Yes.”

But there was no rope in camp—the porters had taken the only two we’d had. I severed a rubber vine with a hatchet, tried to pull it from the tree, and got nowhere. I thought of trying to knock a platform together, but a man in Jonker’s near-hysterical condition was apt to begin struggling. His abrupt return to sanity might be merely a phase of shock. There was no time to waste. I’d have to try to rescue him the hard way.

I cut two saplings, trimmed them hastily, ran back to Jonker. I held my flashlight where I thought he was; saw nothing but smooth water. I felt a wave of weakness, but almost at once, the beam found him. He lay quiet as death.

The Man Who Feared Spiders

“Okay, fellow,” I said. “I’m coming in after you. But first, I’m going to throw a pole out to you. Don’t try to grab it, just. . . Hey, do you hear me, Jonker?”

There was no answer.

“Jonker!” I shouted.

But still there was no answer. Jonker had passed out.

I played the beam of the flashlight over him. He seemed limp, and was sinking at the hips. I threw one of the poles as close to him as I dared, then I laid my own sapling on the water, one end near the shore, the other end reaching towards Jonker. As he was at least thirty feet out, and my sapling was only about twelve feet long, it meant I’d have to move it twice. I felt a compulsion to hurry, but forced myself to act deliberately. I placed my flashlight carefully on the grass, and lay down on the firm bank so that the sapling in the water was at right angles to my hips. Then I rolled into the quicksand—rolled over and on top of the sapling, two complete rolls, then lay on my back, arms outstretched, and rested. My feet sank an inch or two and I eased them from the sand ever so gently. I rolled over again, the sapling supporting my hips. Again I rested.

As I lay staring upwards, the sky began to lighten. I turned my head cautiously, saw a yellow, gibbous moon peeping above the ragged tree-line on a hill. I rolled again, off the end of my sapling, this time, and lay floating entirely unsupported.

Trying to not move an unnecessary muscle, I worked the sapling across my chest, then pushed it towards the top of my head. With arms up, I began to sink. My impulse was to hurry, but I stayed with slow motion. I lifted my head, drew the sapling under it until it was stopped by the back of my neck.

By now I was panting from exertion and I lay still until my breathing quieted, but I couldn’t stop the pounding of my heart. I hooked one arm over the sapling and pulled it under a

African Adventures

shoulder-blade. Again, I rested. Then with my other hand, I worked the sapling under my other shoulder.

My feet were down at least twelve inches and it took a long time to ease them to the surface. I rested again, then with outstretched arms, worked the pole under me down to my hips. Alternatively I rolled and rested—rolled and rested, until I was within ten feet of Jonker.

He began to move and I screamed at him.

“Lie still, Jonker. Still!”

When he tried to sit up, I shouted: “Lie still, you son-of-a-bitch!”

“I know where I am,” Jonker muttered. “The water’s over my belly.”

“Now listen,” I said. “There’s no need for me to come closer. There’s a pole here for you. I’m going to try to push it under you. Don’t make any move to help until I tell you.”

I had to roll over once more to reach Jonker’s sapling, but I got it, pushed one end towards him and thanked the Lord for the moonlight.

When the end of the pole touched him, I said: “Now, Jonker, move one hand very slowly, and steer the end of this pole under the small of your back. Got it? Now gently lift your belly.”

“It won’t lift,” he cried. “My hips just sink deeper.”

I was sinking myself, but took a chance, and pushed. The pole went under him easily. I felt an impulse to cry but cursed instead.

“Reach out and grasp the pole on each side of you, Jonker,” I urged. “Work it slowly under your hips. Then rest. Rest a long time. Don’t use your hands after you get the pole in place. Keep your arms stretched out. Don’t worry about your feet. I’m going back to tear that insect trap into strips, make a rope and pull you out. Can you stick it?”

The Man Who Feared Spiders

“I’m all right—I think.”

“You can’t sink with that pole under you *if you lie still*,” I cried as I prepared to make my own way back to firm ground. Each time I rolled along my pole I had to rest longer. No one who hasn’t worked himself out of quicksand can ever know how strength ebbs. At last I made it—felt solid ground and crawled out to safety. I got to my feet, wobbling with weakness, and rested for a moment by the camp fire.

Then I cut the canvas sheet into strips, knotted them into a rope, tied a twelve-inch chunk of wood to one end, and returned to the edge of the lake. Here I tied the other end of the improvised rope round my waist, and with something close to prayer, heaved the wood chunk at Jonker. It fell across him.

“Okay, old timer,” I cried, “now do what I tell you, and work fast. Untie the wood, and fasten the rope tightly round one wrist. Be sure it’s on for good; if it slips off, you’re a goner. Okay?”

“Okay,” Jonker answered.

I sat waiting for several anxious minutes, for Jonker didn’t seem to be making any movement. Finally he called out:

“You can pull my arm off; this rope won’t come untied. But my legs are in pretty deep.”

“Start working your legs to the surface,” I told him. “Move first one, then the other, just a fraction of an inch at a time. It may take an hour to get them reasonably clear. Is the pole still under your hips?”

“Yes, and my arms are stretched wide.”

While Jonker laboured to free his feet, I encouraged him. I knew that, if he got excited and worked too fast, he’d sink deeper. So I talked to him slowly but continuously.

“Easy does it, Jonker,” I cautioned. “Take all night if you want. Quicksand’s strange stuff. Gentle water pressure from underneath, floats sand so that each grain is suspended free.

African Adventures

There's no traction because the water pressure exactly balances the weight of the sand. Take the pressure away, the water comes to the surface, the sand settles and becomes firm. A month from now when the underground water's dried up, you'll be able to walk across this lake."

"Did you know," I burbled on, "that, if you pull a cow or an antelope out of quicksand, he'll charge you the minute his feet hit firm ground, but horses won't do that."

I talked about this and that—most of it silly stuff, I remember. Once when I stopped, to rest my voice, I heard Jonker panting.

"Rest now, Jonker," I called out to him.

"I'm all in," he replied. "I can't keep on. I've got my legs straight out and my feet are only down about six inches now, but I've pains in my chest—can't breathe." There was panic in his voice.

"All right, fellow," I sang out, "the time has come. I'm going to start pulling. If you ever struggled, struggle now!"

I dug my feet in, leaned forward, and pulled. I pulled until I thought the rope would cut my waist. I pulled until my ears ached, and blood ran from my nose. I heard Jonker yelling in pain, but he seemed far away. He threshed so violently at times that he almost dragged me towards him.

Suddenly, there was no strain on the rope and I stumbled forward and fell. I thought the rope had broken, but I lay there too pooped and sick at heart to do anything about it. Then the rope tugged and I sat up. Jonker was on his feet within a yard of the bank. I jerked the rope frantically and poor Jonker fell forward on his face. I went hand-over-hand along the rope, keeping the strain steady. I got hold of his free hand and pulled him on to the grass. Then I sat down and fought hard to keep from blubbering.

Back at the camp fire I examined Jonker's wrist. The rope had torn his flesh to the bone. I got the first-aid kit, poured

The Man Who Feared Spiders

antiseptic on the torn flesh, then sewed it together as best I could. When I'd bandaged and taped it, I said:

“That'll have to do until we get to Libreville, Jonker.”

Jonker didn't answer—he was in the deep sleep that follows exhaustion.

MURDER IN THE CONGO

SOME MEN DON'T RECOGNIZE adventure when they meet it. Some call adventure a "mess". "I got into a mess," they say. Others look on adventures as vexations—"The elephants became nuisances, so we shot a couple of them." Still others see strange and unusual happenings only as perversities.

On the other hand, there are men like George Vossos, who sense adventure in every struggle no matter how minute—the attempts of a beetle to solve the problem of crawling over a stick in its path—the struggles of a turtle that has fallen on its back—the efforts of a long-tailed bird to fly against wind—sunshine contending with an encroaching cloud.

Such men strip away unessentials so that the problem stands out starkly. The beetle *must* climb over the stick—he has food in his mouth for his hungry brood. The stick is a formidable obstacle, and while overcoming it, the beetle is spotted by a ravenous bird. Will the beetle's brood be fed? Has the beetle sufficient strength or ingenuity to escape peril and achieve his goal?

To those with a sense of drama, the struggles of the beetle may well be more exciting than the charge of a lion, for the lion, except for some queer twist of fate, is foredoomed to failure. All the lion's strength, determination, speed and anger will be futile against a well-placed bullet.

Usually wild game—even big game—is not dangerous to humans. To one who knows its behaviour-pattern, the killing

Murder in the Congo

of an elephant with a heavy-calibred rifle is about as dramatic as shooting a pig in a pasture. The drama is there, however, for those who *think* it is. A man filled with fantastic myths about big beasts, quakes and quivers as he faces them. He sees rage in eyes that protrude with fright, sees killing-lust in a trunk sinuously feeling out the air for danger smells. He jerks the trigger; his shot wounds instead of killing; the beast screams in pain and the "hunter" frantically empties the rifle magazine. The elephant dies slowly, sometimes noisily.

The hunter "knows" he heard the wings of Death. His mouth is dry from fear, lungs tight with suspense. He's experienced drama but it's a drama that exists chiefly in his mind.

"Lions," said Carl Akeley, America's famed museum hunter, "are gentlemen; if they are allowed to go their own way unmolested they will keep to their own paths without encroaching on yours." Akeley felt almost the same about elephants, yet he was horribly mangled by one. It was his own fault, however—he forgot to keep an eye out for one elephant he'd by-passed in the brush while stalking another. Akeley knew those elephants had long been pestered by hunters, knew they'd developed an abnormal hatred of white-man-smell.

Time was when white camera hunters would no more think of facing big game without gun support than they'd think of bathing with clothes on. Today a camera hunter who hires gun support does so in order to protect camera and film, rather than himself.

Walter J. Wilwerding, of Minneapolis, is probably the world's top wild-animal artist. His paintings of big game are major art exhibits in many countries. In 1929, on his first African safari with easel and camera, he was ably "supported" by professional hunters. After taking hundred's of close-ups of everything from crocodile to lion, he decided that gun support was pretty much window-dressing, so on a 1933 African

African Adventures

sketching and camera hunt, he had gun support only occasionally. Wilwerding's longest, most successful safari was in 1953. He painted and photographed leopards, elephants, rhinos, hippos, buffalo, crocodiles, baboons, gorillas—everything. Much work was done at close quarters, yet there was not one gun in his outfit!

True, he encountered drama now and then. On a river, he killed the engine of his boat so he could noiselessly drift close to a drinking elephant. He got close all right, and the elephant showed resentment by attempting to tip the boat over. With no rifle, there was only one thing Wilwerding could do—get the engine re-started. He did it, after some minutes of intense drama. That drama will be reproduced on canvas—quite a contrast to the usual photograph of a fatuously-grinning rifleman beside a carcass.

Hollywood's Miki and Peg Carter have captured many unforgettable moments on moving picture film. Peg, known everywhere in Africa as "that beautiful camera hunter", becomes angry when support guns kill even threatening beasts.

Wanda Vic Persen specialized in stills of charging big game. Like Peg Carter, Wanda preferred dodging to shooting, and waxed sarcastic when a beast was killed.

I once came across an Englishwoman, whose name I've forgotten, who'd set up her camera in the open beside a waterhole. Day after day, she photographed the game that came to drink. Rhinos paused to peer at her. Elephants watched, eyes bugged. Giraffes would look down on the woman with puzzled eyes, then spread their legs and drink. Not only did this woman have no gun, but she worked alone except for one native who cooked and did camp chores.

A melancholy Norwegian, named Reidar Aas, used to sit on a camp stool at a waterhole north of Lisala on the Congo, and talk to the animals. He believed that animals' fear of Man was

Murder in the Congo

but the reflection of Man's fear of animals; that animals sensed fear emanations and responded in kind. He maintained that anger stems from fear, and that beasts who were not afraid, were never angry. Anyway, he proved his theory to his own satisfaction. He feared nothing that breathed; prowled among snakes, held consultations with beasts. And he was never attacked although he said that at times he had to talk fast to keep larger game from devouring him.

Don Rolph, of Los Gatos, California, Miki Carter's twenty-eight-year-old sound man, works even closer to wild animals than Carter. While Miki shoots the pictures, Rolph edges so near to the beast with his directional parabolic mike that he records the sounds of their breathing. One day on the Serengeti Plain, in 1953, while working with feeding lions, cubs chewed through Rolph's mike cable six times. Another day, when he set the shiny mike down for a moment, a cub ran off with it.

Photographer Ace Williams, producer of television shows using wild African game, employs support gunners only as colour in the stories he films.

Truth is, that if one uses a little commonsense, and does not annoy animals, he can walk the length and breadth of Africa unharmed except by flies, ticks, ants, bugs and mosquitoes. I've known traders who, for years, invaded Africa's wildest areas without carrying a firearm. They lived on wild fruits, vegetables and what meat they could trap, or could buy from natives.

The thrills experienced by "hunters" whose delight is in turning living animals into bloody carcasses, are real enough however. First, there's the thrill of standing at a safe distance, pressing a trigger and hurling sudden death. The sense of power gives a boost to maladjusted egos. Second, there's the thrill of seeing blood—not their own—but the animal's. In some men, blood-lust is so dominant that they drool at the sight of a

African Adventures

bleeding beast. Mixed with blood-lust is often the sadistic desire to inflict pain. I've guided men who danced and screamed in apparent ecstasy while watching the agonized struggles of a dying animal.

That type of hunter is more numerous than one likes to believe; and they've one trait in common—they take no chances of being hurt themselves. The idea that an animal should be given a fighting chance for life seems fantastic to them. They see no ignominy in shooting beasts from jeeps, trucks or tree-platforms. They look with disgust on the guide who suggests that, when a wounded animal gets away, the sporting thing is to go after it and kill it.

Fake camera hunters are invading Africa like hordes of locusts these days. They wander among natives and through farmers' fields taking pictures for background. Then they go to Nairobi or some other large city and buy yards of film of charging beasts and combine it with their own. Result is a motion picture record of a very brave "hunter" facing violent death.

Sometimes these psuedo-heroes are hoist with their own petards. Often they are sold film that includes charges by the single-horned rhino of India; and close-ups of enraged Bengal tigers. Of course, there are no single-horned rhinos, nor Bengal tigers in Africa.

There are true sportsmen of all nationalities, but I think, when the tale is told, you'll find that Englishmen lead the rest. Americans are too keen for victory—the kill is the thing. They do it sportingly enough, giving the animal the breaks when possible, but if the beast gets away, a Yank's apt to act as if his favourite football team had suffered a defeat.

With the better-type Englishmen, "the game's the thing". If the beast outwits them, they're more than likely to yell after it: "Well played, Old Thing."

Murder in the Congo

Most Germans I've guided take their hunting seriously. They become good hunters quickly because they pay attention to details. Germans learn spooring, for instance, by patient study. They like to plan an attack on an animal as though they are about to besiege a city. With the exception of certain Prussian officers I've worked for, most Germans are happy to give beasts the edge.

Frenchmen are emotional hunters, inclined to let an animal escape if it arouses their sympathies. It's almost impossible for a French sportsman to shoot a beast that displays likeable traits—an impala buck that stands defiant so that his doe can escape—a lion that's been rolling and tumbling with half-grown cubs. But if an animal is mean, the Frenchman will pump bullets at it with weird cries and shoutings.

Then, there are hunters like Harry Krebs, but not many, thank the Lord. Krebs, in his thirties, big and powerfully muscled, was willing to pay well for the opportunity of accompanying Miki and Peg Carter, Arthur Aylcough (the same Aylcough who'd acted as referee in the Jones-Carrie wager), and myself on a picture-taking safari into northern Congo. Krebs said all he wanted out of the trip were some antelope heads. We took him along because we'd have to shoot antelope for meat, anyway.

Krebs seemed normal enough until we got into the Mangbetu country when he began demanding first shot at each beast. Aylcough, who was collecting heads himself, usually let Krebs have his way, but developed a slow anger. When there was a choice between two beasts, Krebs insisted on having the one with the longer horns.

Aylcough was a quiet fellow, and Krebs should have known that quiet men pack the most dynamite. He either didn't know, or didn't care, for he kept right on making a pest of himself, and grabbing the advantage whenever possible.

African Adventures

One morning we sighted two impala bucks, hindquarters screened by brush, forequarters in plain sight. Both had fine horns. I said:

“One hundred and sixty yards. Krebs take the near buck, Aylcough the far one. Shoot together.”

Both knelt, aimed, and let their shots off. Both bucks fell. Krebs’s horns measured $24\frac{1}{2}$ inches, Aylcough’s $27\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

“World’s record horns!” cried Aylcough, “my giddy aunt!”

Krebs stepped deliberately over to Aylcough’s buck and banged one horn with his clubbed rifle. The horn broke off near the head.

Without a word Aylcough knocked him clean out with a right hook. Peg Carter cried:

“. . . eight, nine, ten, and is *he* sunk!”

I offered Krebs his money back, and the loan of a tracker to guide him to Kilo. He refused and, as I couldn’t very well ditch the guy, he stayed with us.

A week later we camped in a beautiful, brush-ringed glade through which ran a clear, shallow stream. Elephant spoor was plentiful, and Miki, Peg and Aylcough seemed about to get their longed-for elephant sequences at last. Elephant feeding noises were continuous that night. One big fellow actually walked between two pup tents. By dawn the beasts had quieted and we saw three of them at the brush fringe flapping their ears, squeaking with contentment.

Peg and Aylcough got out still cameras; Miki, his “hand organ”. Our five Mangbetu boys set about preparing breakfast. The three elephants, instead of lumbering back into bush, lined up a company front, spread their ears wide and waved sinuous trunks in our direction. They showed no fear. The big beasts were about one hundred yards away, too far for stills. Miki changed lenses and ground out a few feet of film.

Then a large bull pushed through a thicket. The three,

Murder in the Congo

squealing in anger, rushed him. He lumbered across one end of the clearing and disappeared among heavy foliage. The three pals moved around in the open, heads bobbing, then wheeled towards us, stopping less than seventy feet away. Again they spread their ears and peered at us with near-sighted eyes.

"Wynkum, Blynkum, and Nod," exclaimed Peg with delight.

They were of similar size, between ten and eleven feet high at the shoulders. Wynkum's tusks were broken at the tips. Nod's were beautifully curved, but not large—probably thirty pounds each. Blynkum's tusks were so small that at first we thought him a female. All were about twenty years old, we judged.

Grass in the clearing was coarse and long, but had been well-trampled. A few low bushes, smashed down by heavy feet, made grey-green splotches here and there. Seemingly bored with watching us, the beasts ambled to the edge of the clearing where Blynkum tore a leafy branch from a tree and began swishing flies off Nod's back with it. Wynkum, not to be outdone, got a branch of his own and went after flies on Blynkum. We were standing there chuckling at them when a shot blasted behind us. Blynkum lifted his trunk high, screamed in agony, sat down as if weary, then fell over on his side. He struggled to his feet and stood swaying as if about to fall again. Wynkum and Nod, trumpeting, were almost hidden by the trees when with one accord, they turned, lined up at Blynkum's sides, leaned their shoulders against him and tried to help him away.

Two more quick shots rang out. Wynkum shrieked as a bullet ploughed into him, dropped his ears, hunched up his back and stood still. Blynkum, unsupported, staggered a few steps and again fell on his side. Also hit, Nod ran for the trees.

The shooter was Krebs. I turned and saw him standing with his rifle across his arm, but I was too stunned by the sudden tragedy to move. Behind me, I heard Peg crying and Miki

African Adventures

cursing. Suddenly Aylcough tossed me his rifle, and with strangely stiff shoulders, he walked towards Krebs.

Krebs, rifle across his belly, shouted: "Stay away from me, goddam you!"

Aylcough strode on, grabbed the rifle, tossed it aside, then slapped Krebs hard across the right cheek with an open hand. The fight was on and it was a honey while it lasted. Krebs lunged and swung, lunged and flailed, the speed and power of his rushes forcing Aylcough back. Aylcough's heel caught on a trampled bush and he sat down hard. Krebs viciously kicked him in the chest, then jumped on him.

Miki and I raced to pull Krebs off, but before we got to them, Aylcough had got a wristlock and was holding Krebs helpless. Suddenly Aylcough loosed his hold and chopped Krebs hard on the side of the jaw, pushed him away and got to his feet. Krebs rose bellowing. Aylcough jabbed him with three fast, straight lefts, feinted with his right, then drove a hard left to Krebs's solar-plexus. Krebs began to double up, but Aylcough straightened him with another left, pushed his head back and socked him in the floating-ribs with a right hook that didn't travel more than four inches, yet it lifted Krebs clean off his feet.

Krebs fell on his side, rolled over on his back and lay gasping for breath. Aylcough got hold of Krebs's ankles and pushed his knees up against his chest. Krebs's breath came back.

Calmly, Aylcough reached for his rifle and walked towards Blynkum. He saw that the elephant was dying, and he put a bullet in the beast's brain. Wynkum still stood hunched up, making coughing noises. When approached, he walked draggily away. Blood indicated the wound was low in the stomach and as the chances were he'd recover, we let him go. Nod was nowhere in sight.

We were a sad lot as we gathered beside the pup tents. No one knew exactly what to do and Krebs crawled from his tent,

Murder in the Congo

took a look round and went back inside. I called one of the Mangbetus and said:

"Joe, you go with *Bwana* Krebs as far as Kilo. See he arrives safely, then go to Ngoroloo's village and wait there for *Bwana* Miki." Then I called Krebs out and told him to be on his way. Half an hour later he was gone.

We shifted camp, worked with buffalo, antelope and rhino for three weeks, then, en route to Lake Albert, stopped again at the Camp of the Three Elephants. Nod was there and so was Wynkum, still standing with hanging ears, back humped. He stood broadside to the trees at the clearing's edge—a very sick elephant.

Nod, one ear drooping because of Krebs's bullet, eyed us for several minutes, then moved towards us. Peg knelt low in the grass, her camera in front of her. Miki set up his movie camera behind Peg. Aylcough stood, still-camera ready, behind Miki. A little to one side of Aylcough, I kept guard, rifle bolt back, finger on trigger.

Nod kept coming.

His good ear drew back suddenly in a quarter-cock—sign of a coming charge. He lifted his trunk, then curled it back between his tusks.

"Get out of his way, Peg," I shouted.

Too late. With a quick shuffle forward, Nod was within reaching distance of Peg, who would have no chance, if he reached his trunk for her. But, Nod hadn't seen Peg, for he stopped within five feet of her, and, coughing with anger, eyed Miki.

Aylcough cried: "Shoot him, damn it!"

I didn't dare. If I killed him instantly, he'd fall on Peg; if I wounded him, he'd trample her to death. Miki moved quickly to one side, hoping to lure Nod away. Instead, Nod moved forward, one great foot missing Peg by inches. Again Nod

African Adventures

stopped, this time eyeing Aylcough. His tusks were straight down and he shoved out his trunk with tip curled under. Then he trumpeted, lifted his tusks, curled his trunk back under his throat and charged like a battering ram. Miki ran left, Aylcough right. Peg rose from the grass behind the elephant, took a picture of him from the rear, then scuttled after Miki.

Shrilling and trumpeting, Nod took after Miki and Peg. I swung my rifle for a shot, but the beast stopped to tear up a bush, giving Miki, Peg and Aylcough time to clamber on to the flat-bed truck where the four Mangbetus were already huddled. Aylcough grabbed the wheel, stepped on the starter and the truck began bumping across the clearing.

Nod, screeching without let-up, followed, saw the pup tents, and hurled them in all directions. I cut across the clearing, turned at the trees and saw Wynkum standing miserably. I dropped to one knee and put four slugs in the animal's side, a little below and behind his ear. I heard the slugs hit solidly. He didn't even twitch his ears, but a moment later, collapsed, the big heart riddled.

Aylcough wheeled the truck among the trees and over the rough, stump-studded roads the boys had cut. He moved in low gear despite the raging elephant chasing him—a broken axle could mean death.

I pushed at an angle through the shrub, met the truck on a curve, leapt aboard and sat on the floorboards beside Peg. Miki ground away at his camera like a butcher making ham-burger. Five times Nod was within trunk distance of Miki, and five times the beast stopped to tear up bushes. Five times I raised my rifle to shoot, and five times Miki shrieked:

“No—not yet! Not yet!”

Abruptly we left the trees, and rolled on to the plain. Aylcough shifted into second gear and stepped on the gas. Suddenly the car jerked, and came to a dead stop.

Murder in the Congo

Nod came thundering on.

The Mangbetus jumped and ran. Peg grabbed Miki, but he shook her off and kept turning the camera crank. I aimed an inch above Nod's eye, and squeezed the trigger.

Nod's legs folded, his great, seven-ton body crumpled and hit the back of the stalled truck in a sliding crash. Miki, tripod and Peg were flung into the air together. I can still see seven legs—Miki's, Peg's and the tripod's—flailing frantically.

It isn't enough to say "all's well that ends well". Truth is, as any professional white hunter would tell you, I was a fool. I'd taken chances with clients' lives. That my clients insisted on taking those chances is not a valid excuse—the lives of the party were my responsibility—pictures or no pictures.

The soft spot above an elephant's eye is only about two inches in diameter, and as I have said before it isn't in the same place on all elephants. In this case Nod's was where I'd aimed, which was lucky.

But the risk paid off for Miki and Peg. Film exhibitors are unanimous in declaring that Miki's sequence of the wildly-charging Nod is the most thrilling ever screened.

I said good-bye to Miki, Peg and Aylcough at Kilo, went to Albertville to pick up another hunting party. I found them on a binge and failing in my attempt to sober them up, I telegraphed Nicobar Jones for orders.

Four days after Jones's reply, I'd ridden one hundred and twenty weary miles north-west from Albertville on the Congo shore of Lake Tanganyika, to help Ives Jenssen, dean of old-time ivory hunters, celebrate his ninetieth birthday. I took along two bottles of Cape brandy to urge his tongue to tales of adventure.

I pulled up my horse as the forest trail broke abruptly into the open and sat looking at Jenssen's deep-thatched, two-room hut squatting contentedly in bright sunlight in the centre of a

African Adventures

ten-acre clearing. His vegetable garden throve; yellow roses climbed over the walls of the hut.

Suddenly, I caught the hysterical barking of a dog from behind the house, and my horse pranced nervously. I kicked him in the flanks and rounded the house at a canter. A grim sight confronted me.

Jenssen, bloody, and dead, lay on his back on newly-ploughed ground. Five filthy-feathered vultures fluffed and shuffled angrily as Lascar, Jenssen's big, white boarhound, with vicious rushes, kept them from the body. I hit the ground and killed three of the vultures with the butt of my rifle. The other two, with broken wings, flopped obscenely across the field. I dropped them with two fast shots, then, sick at heart, knelt by the body of the old, white hunter. Lascar lay near, panting.

One side of Jenssen's chest was crushed. Flies swarmed on dried blood. Elephant tracks in the soft ground seemed to indicate the killer. I got a blanket from the hut and covered my old friend.

Nicobar Jones, my first hunting boss, had taught me most of what I knew about big game and antelope, but it was Jenssen who had introduced me to the Africa of the tree-tops—the fascinating green continent of semi-gloom that few men know—the continent of tree-snakes, pottos, flying and booming squirrels, monkeys, lemurs, dormice, bats, anhwantiboes and a multitude of other tree-dwelling animals and insects.

Jenssen had taught me well. But that had been long ago, before he'd retired to live peacefully in his lonely forest clearing. And now, on his ninetieth birthday, he was dead.

With a tightness in my throat, I examined the elephant tracks more closely, and got another shock. This elephant had only two legs. All the tracks were oval—hind feet tracks; no sign of a round front-foot track.

I examined the body more carefully and discovered that

Murder in the Congo

Jenssen's chest had not been crushed by the weight of an elephant's foot. It had been stove-in with a blow from the side—possibly a kick from a heavy boot. Yet, there was no shoe print anywhere among the maze of elephant tracks.

I followed the spoor to where it disappeared into leaf-mould at the edge of the trees. As I walked back to Jenssen's body, I remembered his Pygmy servant, Tock-Tockie, and I yelled for him, although I felt sure he'd not answer. No doubt I'd find him dead, too if I hunted long enough.

I wrapped the blanket snugly round Jenssen's body and started to carry it to the hut. My horse whinnied softly and I paused to listen. Hoof beats. At the side of the hut a mounted man appeared—an assistant territorial administrator, Henrik Poulet, who'd once been pointed out to me in Albertville. I put Jenssen's body back on the ground and stood facing Poulet. He stared at the blanket-wrapped body, pulled his revolver and said:

“Take off the blanket.”

I did as he commanded. Poulet scowled at the crushed chest, pondered the elephant tracks, and said: “Killed by an elephant, I see. But who fired two shots? On my way to Yambi I heard them and came here.”

I pointed to the vultures. Poulet holstered his revolver.

Four sweating natives wearing white shirts and khaki shorts trotted from beyond the hut and halted behind Poulet. He tossed his reins to one, and dismounted. I startled him by saying: “Poulet, a man wearing elephant feet over his boots killed Jensse:.”

“Don't be ridiculous,” he said incredulously.

I pointed to the tracks. “All oval. Hind feet. Not an inch deep. The ground's soft. An elephant would have sunk three or four inches. An angry elephant would have stomped the body, then tried to cover it with branches. Some man did this—a

African Adventures

white man. No native would be dumb enough to try to fool police with phony elephant feet clues."

Poulet looked scornful. "You talk like an ass," he muttered as he signalled two natives to carry Jenssen's body to the hut.

"Ask your trackers," I said.

"I know every white man in this area," Poulet said. "None of them would kill a man. Nor do I think you would. Nevertheless you must stay here until I have time to get the police. As for this idea of a man wearing elephant's feet . . ." He laughed nastily.

"Ask your trackers."

Poulet turned to the native who was holding his horse. "Well, Wabo?"

Wabo said: "*Ndovu* was a man. *Ndovu* does not kill thus. Nor is he without front feet."

Poulet turned to the second native and said:

"Tell Wabo he is a fool, Wanyutu."

Wanyutu said: "It is not Wabo who is a fool, *Bivana*."

Poulet slashed him across the chest with his rhino-hide whip.

"What's the matter with you, Poulet?" I snapped. "The boy only answered your question." I watched Wanyutu open his shirt and finger the purplish welt. Moving towards Poulet I said:

"I'm going after Jenssen's killer. A man so stupid as he was shouldn't be too hard to track down. When the police get here . . ."

Poulet whirled angrily. "Shut up," he said, and drew his revolver again. I tucked my rifle under my arm and went to the hut. Poulet followed, stood glaring at Jenssen's body on the floor, wrote a chit and told one of the natives to take it to the magistrate at Albertville. Then he said to me:

"I can't hold a gun on you for six or seven days, but if you leave here, Wabo will follow you. You can't get away."

Murder in the Congo

I grinned. "Let's bury Jenssen," I said. I wrapped the body in an extra blanket, took a shovel from a kitchen corner, handed it to Wanyuntu and went into the garden. We buried Jenssen beside a bank of red geraniums. I watched Wanyuntu fill the grave, then I said:

"You're a Kikuyu, Wanyuntu."

"It is so."

"But you work in the Congo."

"I was unhappy in Kenya."

"The dead man was my friend," I said.

"When one buries a friend, he buries part of his own heart."

"Wanyuntu," I said, "I want to find my friend's killer."

"I, too, have read the spoor, *Bwana*. Even my son, who is in his first year as a herder of goats, would not be deceived by the spoor. The killer's brain is filled with maggots. Not many men are so mad. He would be easy to find. You will leave this place and search until you find him who kills aged men. I will go with you."

"What about *Bwana* Poulet?"

Wanyuntu shrugged. "We will go, O Hunter, and Wabo will follow us, but he will not tell *Bwana* Poulet where we are. Wabo, too, is Kikuyu."

That night when Poulet's snores had become regular I slipped from the hut into bright moonlight. Wanyuntu and Wabo waited for me at the edge of the trees. Wabo said:

"Wanyuntu knows a clearing not far within the forest. Go with him, O American, and go safely." Then he disappeared into the night.

Half an hour later Wanyuntu and I entered a small, moonlit glade in which someone had built a crude shelter of woven branches. We made a small fire and squatted facing each other across it. I said:

"Wanyuntu, I want you to visit the homes of all white men in

African Adventures

this area. There can't be more than ten or twelve. Talk to servants. Find out in which houses elephants' feet are used for walking-stick stands. Find a foot with a stone-gouge at the base of the second toe."

"It comes to me that I will find that foot, *Bwana*," Wanyutu said. He left at dawn.

I was hungry, but I didn't dare shoot. I made a snare from a vine and some withes and during the next twenty-four hours I caught a squirrel, a large green bird and a plump, grey monkey. I broiled them on a stick and ate them with raw shaggymane mushrooms. Mid-morning of the second day, Wabo arrived, saying:

"Mpelembe, the messenger *Bwana* Poulet sent to Albertville, met a white police sergeant and eight black constables on the very night he left. Yesterday they came to the hut of the dead one. Six of the constables are trackers and they have been told to find you. *Bwana* Poulet is very angry."

"Who remains at the hut?"

"None remain, *Bwana*. The white men follow the trackers."

"My horse?"

"*Bwana* Poulet rides his own horse and leads yours."

"And Lascar, the big white dog?"

"*Bwana* Poulet has shot the dog, *Bwana*."

"Fine—just fine," I ruminated. "I'll have a talk with *Bwana* Poulet one of these days. Can you find Wanyutu?"

"I will find him."

"Good boy," I said. "Tell him to come to me at Jenssen's hut when he finds the elephant feet."

"*Bwana*." Wabo hesitated, then blurted: "If you wish it I will put a spear through the back of *Bwana* Poulet."

"Thanks, Wabo," I said, "but I've other plans for him. Go now, and find Wanyutu."

I spent the rest of that day in Jenssen's hut going through his

Murder in the Congo

things. There were faded letters written in Norwegian, dated more than fifty years before. From the handwriting I could tell they were from a girl. There were two faded photographs of an elderly woman—Jenssen's mother, I guessed. I found many notes about birds, animals and insects—some quite recent. There were knives, and a box of odd-calibred bullets. In a battered cigar box were thirty-one British gold sovereigns. Nowhere did I find a clue to the killer.

Scouting outside the hut, I came across a narrow trail leading into the woods and to a small circular opening in which was a short bench and a crude table. Jenssen had built himself a hide-away. I slept there in my blankets that night. When I wakened in the morning I noticed a tree that showed evidence of having been climbed. On a hunch, I scrambled into the lower branches—and my hunch paid off. Wedged in a crotch was an old-fashioned dispatch box wrapped in a piece of waterproof tarpaulin. I dropped it to the ground, slid down, opened the box and found a single folded parchment. It revealed something about Jenssen I'd never known:

In 1926 and 1927 he'd been an investigator for the League of Nations Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Opium!

Things began to clear in my mind. The thug who'd killed Jenssen had probably been hopped up. That would explain his insane rage, and his bizarre attempt to hang the killing on an elephant. Jenssen had perhaps discovered a dope-smuggling set-up. This meant that I might run into something big—and bad.

Back in the hut I ate raw carrots for breakfast and had scarcely washed them down with cold coffee when Wanyuntu arrived with news that he'd found the tell-tale elephant foot.

"It is in the house of hide buyer. His name is Faure. His first name is Remi. He is a small man and very timid. He has no wife."

African Adventures

I got my rifle, shoved some carrots in my pockets and followed Wanyutu. Three hours later I entered Faure's house without knocking, Wanyutu following. Faure stood beside a rough-wood table, a needle poised for a shot in the arm. I grabbed the syringe, pushed him into a chair and said:

“You killed Jenssen, you son-of-a-bitch.”

He made no answer; just sat, twitching. The pupils of his eyes were rimmed with silver. Wanyutu handed me the stone-gouged elephant's foot. I held it up and said:

“I'm going to kick your ribs in just as you kicked in Jenssen's.”

“Martinelli—he did it—Martinelli,” Faure said hoarsely, then doubled over, fell to the floor and began to shriek. He turned on his back, face paper-white, sweat like raindrops beading his forehead and lip.

“Please—the medicine—for the love of God!” he cried.

I pulled him into sitting position, handed him the syringe and he began to cry. He steadied his shaking left arm between his knees and shoved the needle into a vein. The plunger went home slowly. His face grew red. He sighed deeply, then lay back smiling. I waited a few minutes.

“All right, begin talking,” I said.

Faure got to his feet.

“Martinelli hid my supply. All I had was in this syringe. I'll 'burn' again in a couple of hours, but . . .”

He babbled a mixture of Belgian-French and English. The gist of his story was that he'd been delivering dope to a Lake Tanganyika boatman—dope supplied by an Italian Communist named Carmelo Martinelli. An addict, he'd had to obey Martinelli's orders, or “burn”. Jenssen had somehow got on to the racket and had sent a letter by Tock-Tockie, to be delivered to Kenya Police. Martinelli had learned of the letter, followed Tock-Tockie in a car and had run him down. Tock-Tockie

Murder in the Congo

died. Martinelli had then taken Faure with him to Jenssen's hut, and after kicking the old man to death, had got crazily high on heroin. He'd then sent Faure for the elephant feet. Eight hours later, when Faure got back to Jenssen's, Martinelli put on the elephant feet like boots and stamped round the body.

I said: "Faure, you and I are going to call on Mr. Martinelli. Where does he live?"

Faure pointed through a window at the ridge of a thatched roof showing above a mound about a half-mile away.

Martinelli opened the door to my knock. He was blonde and chunky. When he saw Faure he grunted as if surprised, then turned slightly-crossed brown eyes on me. I banged him under the chin with the heel of my hand. He staggered backwards, tried to recover, and fell forward on his face. I dragged him into a front room, sat in a chair and watched him until he got to his feet. In excellent English, he said:

"If it's stuff you're after, I have none."

I said: "You killed Jenssen."

"I don't know any Jenssen," he replied.

I turned to speak to Faure, but Faure had vanished. Wanyuntu stood by the closed door. "Where's Faure?" I demanded and Wanyuntu pointed to a door at the opposite side of the room. I opened the door which led to a kitchen. It was empty. I gave Wanyuntu my skinning knife, saying: "Watch Martinelli," and I ran through the kitchen, opened the back door just in time to see Faure high-tailing across the veldt with what looked like a cigar box under his arm.

I went back to Martinelli and said: "Faure's taken off with a box of your morphine."

Martinelli gasped as if he'd been punched in the belly, and jumped at me with fingers like claws. I clipped him with a short hook to the side of the chin, dropping him to his knees. I jerked

African Adventures

him erect, pushed him down in a chair and said to Wanyutu:

“Go find Poulet and the police sergeant. Bring them here—fast.” Then I sat on a chair opposite Martinelli and there I sat for more than twelve hours. Martinelli spoke twice, each time for permission to sniff heroin. I let him sniff.

When the sergeant and Poulet arrived I charged Martinelli with Jenssen’s murder. I repeated Faure’s story, and the sergeant believed it. He placed a native constable at each door of the house, and motioned me outside. In French, he said:

“My name is Lenotre—André Lenotre. I cannot arrest Martinelli on mere say-so. Where is the witness, Faure?”

“He’s run off with Martinelli’s drugs. If you’ll permit it, Sergeant, I’ll follow Faure and bring him back.”

“Bon. Why not?”

“How about Poulet . . .”

“*Quel salaud!*” Lenotre said, and spat.

I called Wanyutu, told him to follow Faure, then turned and shook hands with Lenotre. He said:

“I’ll hold Martinelli here for six days. That’s the best I can do without the witness.”

“You’ll have your witness, Sergeant,” I assured him.

I untied my horse from Poulet’s saddle, put my rifle in its saddle-boot, and galloped after Wanyutu. At Faure’s house, a native servant was telling Wanyutu that Faure had ridden away on a horse, taking with him a bundle of food, a revolver and a little box.

By questioning natives, Wanyutu and I managed to stay pretty close behind Faure for three days—Wanyutu running beside my horse. We finally trailed him to a small, home-made dock on Lake Tanganyika. Nosing about among the Blacks, Wanyutu learned that Faure had traded his horse for a boat and was heading for a fisherman’s shack on the opposite shore.

Leaving my horse as security for a flat-bottomed row-boat,

Murder in the Congo

we followed. We found Faure's boat tied to a fallen tree, but the shack was empty.

We followed a faint trail across a quarter-mile of marsh, hit hard terrain and dry, high grass. A deep, rocky, waterless wash cut a gash diagonally across the plain. Finding anyone in this arid wilderness seemed hopeless—Faure had all of East Africa to hide in. Sergeant Lenotre could hold Martinelli only three more days. I was certain that, when the guards were withdrawn, Martinelli would disappear. I'd have to find Faure within a few hours. And I did, or rather, he found us.

Night fell, and I was almost too pooped to build a fire of twigs and grass to cook some big frogs which Wanyuntu captured. We ate, and I dozed sitting up, too weary to lie down. A grunt from Wanyuntu woke me and there was Faure, standing just within the circle of firelight.

He was hopped to the eyebrows. He stared vaguely, waving one arm as if swimming. He said:

"There's animals out there and I can't find my revolver." Then on a flat stone beside the fire he spotted two cleaned and skinned frogs that we hadn't cooked. He grabbed and wolfed them raw. "Someone stole my food," he said.

The guy was doped, all right, but he still hugged that little box under one arm. He had remained standing all this time, but now he sat down, nodded sleepily, struggled to remain upright, then fell back sound asleep.

I hid the box in the gully and came back to lie down near him. We had no blankets, but neither the chill nor the coughing and snorting of hippos in the lake disturbed us.

Wanyuntu and I were up at the crack of dawn, but Faure slept until well after sun-up. He wakened clear-headed, but sick, and begged for "just one sniff". I refused. Wanyuntu speared a four-foot lizard, and we ate. Faure wanted no food, but pleaded again for his drug.

African Adventures

“After you’ve answered some questions, Faure,” I told him. “To whom does the boatman deliver the dope?”

“Most of it goes to Kikuyu secret cults.”

“Do they have money to pay for it?”

“It’s free to them.”

“Why?”

“All I know is that Communists are behind the deal. Martinelli told me it’s Arabian opium.”

“Go on.”

“Give me my medicine, first—please.”

I got the box from the gully and gave him a big pinch of grey powder. He held it in the back of his hand, sniffed it, rubbed his nose with the heel of his hand and began talking so fast I could hardly understand him. He said he’d delivered one package to the boatman in December, and three weeks later, assassins of the *Dini ya Jesu Kristo* (Cult of Jesus Christ) had killed Assistant Police Inspector Dominic Mortimer and two of his native constables. Six weeks later, Faure had delivered another shipment and, within a few days, members of the *Dini ya Msambwa* (Cult of Good Guardian Spirits) had attacked a Catholic Mission at Malakisi in Kavironda Province. Eleven of the attackers had been killed.

“Assistant Superintendent Walker of the Kenya Police had his head bashed in during the affray,” Faure said, and wept.

“Okay, Faure,” I said. “You’re going back to testify against Martinelli.”

“Yes,” he agreed, then, taking me by surprise, grabbed the box and ran up the gully. “Go get him, Wanyetu,” I called and the Kikuyu took off, spear in hand. He stopped suddenly, sniffed the air and yelled back to me:

“We must run, *Bwana*. I smell the dogs.”

Sure enough, the air held the taint of wild hunting dogs. A second later a sudden gust brought the full force of nauseating

Murder in the Congo

stench. I picked up my rifle and called: "Hurry, Wanyutu. They'll kill Faure."

We stumbled up the rocky wash, mounting to a protruding ledge in order to see the surrounding plain. We heard the dogs' bell-like *ooing*. Then, there they were—about thirty beautiful white-yellow-and-black brutes racing after a terror-driven antelope. Before them swept the most revolting odour in all Africa—a stink far more sickening than that of mating crocodiles. We could see up and down the gully and across the plain on either side, but Faure was not in sight.

Every animal in Africa fears the hunting dog. For the sheer hell of it, he kills game both big and little, day and night. Other carnivora kill to eat, but the hunting dog kills for the joy of tearing flesh and spilling blood. He kills leopard, buffalo, zebra, hyenas—everything except the elephant, hippo and rhino. He sometimes kills men. He is faster than the cheetah, has tremendous endurance, and fears nothing—not even the lion.

The dogs hunt in packs of from three to one hundred, and chase their prey in relays. They seldom attack an animal's head, but take turns running alongside, slashing the beast's flanks with their long, white fangs—slashing away until the animal's bowels protrude, then pulling the guts out little by little until the victim crashes in death. They tear the carcass to pieces in silent ferocity, then trot away in quest of another jolly chase.

Hunting dogs roam almost everywhere in Africa; and night or day makes no difference—they kill whenever they come across an animal. With the smell of fresh blood in their nostrils they ignore the sound of a rifle. Their stench grows stronger under excitement, and few men get a whiff without gagging.

The antelope stumbled. The pack fell back, leaving the leader beside the faltering beast. The dog grabbed the trailing entrails in his teeth and braced his feet in a skidding stop. The antelope crumpled. Instantly, the dogs were at him. Their

African Adventures

ooing ceased and they shredded the carcass with no sound except a sort of lecherous panting.

I shot the leader and his pack tore him to pieces exactly as they'd torn the antelope. I was about to fire again, but realized I had only ten cartridges—nine in the magazine and one in the breech.

The dogs separated into three packs and began running in a wide circle, five-inch ears stiffly erect; sweet-toned *ooing* singing through the air. And then from the grass in the centre of the circle, Faure rose to his feet. Instantly, two of the dog packs stopped and faced him. The third pack, belling excitedly, raced towards him. The pack leader shot ahead, fangs slashing Faure as it passed. Faure screamed, holding his box above his head with both hands.

I shot fast and three dogs dropped. As the packs joined to rend the carcasses, Faure ran. The pack separated into two, and followed Faure at a slow, easy lope. When they drew up on him they paused to let him get ahead, then took up the tantalizing chase again.

"I've only seven cartridges left, Wanyutu," I called. "I'll drop as many dogs as I can. While the others are rending them, you cut in with your spear. Let's go."

"No, *Bivana*," Wanyutu said.

Then I remembered that Kikuyus would rather die than touch a hunting dog.

I raced across the plain. I knelt, aimed carefully, pressed the trigger. A dog jumped high and was torn to bits almost before it hit the ground. I gained about thirty yards before the brutes took off after Faure again. Panting too hard, I missed the next shot, but the bullet ricocheted and wounded a dog. He went the way of the others. Five shots left—and at least twenty-five dogs.

Faure kept running, but was stumbling. The biggest dog

Murder in the Congo

raced alongside him, looking up at his face. Faure doubled back. The big dog stopped and watched while another dog loped beside Faure, snapping at his side. •

Faure finally dropped, and as the dogs bunched, I let loose with my five remaining cartridges—almost without aiming. Six dogs dropped. One bullet had got two. The pack ignored Faure while they ripped into their fallen comrades. I went up, swinging my rifle by the barrel.

Up-wind, beyond the dog stink, a Tommy gazelle came out from behind a low bush to dance stiff-legged in the sunlight. Without one backward glance at me or at Faure, the dogs raced after the Tommy.

Faure, poor fellow, was dead, the little box beside him. His left side was torn and bloody, but his wounds hadn't killed him—he'd been run to death. We covered him with rocks from the gully, safe from hyenas and vultures.

Sergeant Lenotre met me as I pulled my horse to a stop before Martinelli's house and threw the reins to Wanyutu. I handed Lenotre the box of dope and said:

"Faure is dead, Sergeant."

"So is Martinelli," Lenotre said. "He shot himself the day after you left."

I told the sergeant the story Faure had told me about the dope and the Kikuyu societies. He said:

"That story you must tell to the authorities at Leopoldville."

Poulet came out of the house, scowling. I drove my left into his belly and when he tipped forward, I clipped him on the chin with my right. He fell like a wet sack. I said to Lenotre:

"When Poulet wakes up, tell him that punch was for a dog named Lascar."

Motioning Wanyutu to follow, I mounted again and rode off to report to Leopoldville.

NIGHTMARES IN THE JUNGLE

IF YOU READ AFRICAN hunting articles you've probably seen pictures of Bos, a bull buffalo; Archie, a greater koodoo; and Percy, a big, male rhino. Magnificent animals with near-record horns—the three of them have been dead for more than thirty years. Today their carcasses are papier-maché, covered with their own hides, but they're still magnificent animals—papier-maché or not.

The animals have made a fortune for their owner, an East Indian, of Nairobi (formerly of Dar-es-Salaam), who, at the rate of \$25 per photograph, permits "hunters" to pose beside the "trophies".

Bos, Archie and Percy have near-perfect heads. The animals have not changed their poses since they were stuffed. Archie rests his nose on the ground, his beautiful, fifty-six-inch horns pointing up. Bos lies with neck stretched out, his horns spread a full fifty-five inches. Percy lies in practically the same position as Bos, his twenty-nine-inch front horn sweeping aloft like a curved dagger.

Bos, Archie and Percy have been killed a hundred different ways in a hundred different magazine articles by a hundred different writers. Bos seems to have always been "red-eyed with hate". Poor Percy, whose original death was from a single .257 bullet through a temple, shows up in stories as an "insane

Nightmares in the Jungle

monstrosity intent on murder". Archie usually "slashed at me with horns that could tear the bowels from an elephant".

Actually, all three animals were killed in 1920 by Nicobar Jones, who shot Bos while the buffalo was peacefully chewing his cud beneath a thorn tree; Archie, as he stood motionless on a hillside, staring up-wind; and Percy as he voided dung in a tiny clearing in the brush.

I've a fondness for bar-room hunter-writers. They're harmless fellows, smart enough to know they can pick up better hunting yarns in pubs than they can on the veldt. Many professional hunters are thirsty souls and, for a free drink, will lay the thrills on thick. Stories by pub-hunters are almost always over-written. Like this:

"The antelope was a beauty. He stood broadside to me, his marvellous horns piercing the blue sky. I raised my rifle, looked along the barrel, but couldn't keep the front sight still because of the wild thumping of my heart. Was I to toil for days through Africa's heat and dust to locate this magnificent beast, only to lose it because of overpowering excitement? God forbid! Exerting every bit of my willpower, I steadied the rifle and squeezed the trigger . . .!"

And he drops a one hundred and thirty pound bushbuck with fourteen-inch horns.

If he writes about fishing on the Thicka, he says:

"I could tell he was a whopper by the way he rocketed the fly. No lipping the lure, but one wild, foaming rush, instant capture, and the lightning-like spurt for what the fish thought was the safety of the brush-lined river bank. Cautiously I felt the line, realized the hook was well-set, and began reeling in. I might just as well have set off a charge of dynamite under the rainbowed-beauty, for he charged across the current like a speedboat gone mad, the tightly-angling line cutting a foaming fin on the water. Back and forth, back and forth, every moment

African Adventures

fraught with threats of disaster to rod, line and leader . . . ”

And on and on until at last, exhausted but triumphant, the angler lands an eight-inch trout.

Hen O'Toole was one of these pub-hunter-writers. The day he arrived in Nairobi he went on a bender and spent two weeks staggering up and down Delamere Avenue, being thrown out of night clubs because he didn't wear a white tie. He'd almost worn out his welcome at the bars when he reached the conclusion that the best way to get off the liquor was to go on safari. He hired a white hunter friend of mine, Pelman O'Connor, and spent three months teetotalling it down the Congo. However, at Port Francqui on the Kasai River, his thirst got behind him and pushed him face first into a case of Johnny Walker.

By the time O'Toole had killed the twelfth bottle, he was no longer welcome in Port Francqui, so O'Connor took him up-river a few miles and made camp. Three 'days later, I came along with a two-man hunting party and camped a hundred yards downstream from them.

As always when I expected to remain in one place for more than a day or two, I had the natives knock-up a John. This one was made from bits of packing cases, some canvas and three or four flattened-out paraffin tins. The door was a sheet of galvanized corrugated iron. It was a good, solid John, even though it looked like the patched-up hut of a Karroo Hottentot. What's more, it was a two-holer.

My clients were Ben Solomon, a wealthy, big-hearted, laughing, uneducated Londoner, who'd made his money, as he said: “in 'errings”, and a chinless Englishman named Stephen Buccleugh—a real man, even though he acted and talked like something out of Wodehouse. Both were after heads, and were getting them.

On the evening of the day we made camp, Solomon and

Nightmares in the Jungle

Buckleugh were having a sun-downer at a folding table between their pup-tents when O'Toole came over, saw the bottle, picked it up, read the label and said:

"Haig and Haig! A poem in *usquebaugh*!"

Buckleugh said: "*Usquebaugh*. Water-of-Life, what? Have one."

O'Toole handed the bottle to Solomon, who poured a jolt into a tin mug and handed it to O'Toole. That was a mistake, for O'Toole's thirst overwhelmed him again and he stayed to kill the bottle.

Early next morning he was back, bringing his thirst with him. An hour later when he staggered back to his own camp, Buckleugh said:

"This cawn't go on, y'know. The chap's a bit of a cadge, what?"

"Not a bad bloke," Solomon said, "but 'e does soak hit hup like a blinkin' sponge."

"Chap's kidneys not too good," Buckleugh said. "Pumps ship after each drink. Must tell him to use the W.C. Cawn't have people pumping ship all over the lot."

So, when O'Toole came back that afternoon for more drinks, he was shown the John and requested to use it, which he did, frequently. In fact, by the time he was high again, he'd worn a path to the corrugated iron door.

That evening one of the porters remarked that the boys were tired of antelope meat and asked me to shoot a hippo. Late that night, I bagged a young, five-hundred-pounder that came fussing to the river's edge. I had the boys lug the carcass to camp and lay it behind the John, planning on cutting it up in the morning.

O'Toole showed up at breakfast, and without permission, reached into Buckleugh's liquor box, took out a bottle, pulled the cork and gargled a long, slow drink.

African Adventures

Buckleugh was angry, but said nothing. However, Solomon was less polite. He said:

“ ’Ere, ’ere, that won’t do. W’y don’t you tyke the bloody bottle and go ’ome?”

O’Toole did. I said:

“One time Hollywood’s Larry Crosby, public relations man for his brothers Bing and Bob, decided to go fishing and forget Crosby legends for a while, so he and I went up the St. Joe River in Idaho’s panhandle after Dolly Vardens, rainbows and cut-throats.

“At our camp we had a daily visitor who came to cadge drinks just as O’Toole does. He was an old, bearded trapper named Rourke, and his thirst was something to see. Anyway, we got tired of it, shot a black bear, seated him on the John, and when Rourke pushed open the door, he squealed like a woman, hightailed it out of camp and never came back.”

Buckleugh exclaimed: “Hah! Bear on the W.C. Might frighten a chap, what? Suppose the fellow . . . Oh, by Jove, that was the thought behind the rag, what? Jolly good. Frightened the chap away. Wish we had a bear.”

“We’ve a hippo,” I said.

Solomon laughed. Buckleugh looked puzzled. I said:

“I could shore up the seat of the John, have the boys set the hippo on it, close the door, and . . .”

I thought Buckleugh would choke. “Just like the bear,” he cackled. “Why not?”

The hippo’s legs were stiff and we had a hard time getting the beast into the John, and seated. No matter how we tried, we couldn’t keep the back legs from sticking out straight. We finally got him into a more or less natural pose, closed the door and waited for O’Toole to show up. He arrived after lunch, in pretty bad shape, and parched for a drink. After he’d taken a couple of quick ones, we put a half-filled bottle on the table,

Nightmares in the Jungle

told him to make himself at home, got our rifles and went off into the brush. Hidden from O'Toole, we circled and lay behind a bush close to one side and a little in front of the John.

We'd been there only a few minutes when O'Toole, carrying the bottle in one hand, staggered to the John door and pushed it hard with a foot. The door opened part-way, banged against the hippo's outstretched foot and slammed shut.

O'Toole said: "Excuse me," backed away a few feet, said: "Hurry it up, will you?" uncorked the bottle, wiped the top with his palm, tipped it, drank, corked the bottle, placed it upright on the ground and said:

"Jazz it up in there. I can't wait all day."

Buccleugh was so red with repressed laughter that even his ears glowed. Solomon stared, entranced. O'Toole waited a few minutes, cursed, walked up and kicked the door. "For Cripe's sake!" he said angrily.

He took another drink, placed the bottle at his feet, put his hand on the door, pushed cautiously, pecked through the slight opening, staggered backwards, tripped over the bottle and sat down. He sat for a few minutes mumbling something we couldn't hear, picked up the bottle, stared at it, started to throw it, hesitated, set the bottle down, got to his feet and approached the John again. With a hand on the door, he paused, said: "Come out, goddam it!" and jumped back hurriedly.

Nothing happened.

He pushed the door open as far as it would go, put his head in the opening, leapt backwards, picked up the bottle and hurled it at the hippo, staggered to within a few feet of where we lay, moaned: "Oh, my God!" and began to run. He started in a half-circle, seemed to get his direction suddenly, and headed straight for his own camp.

By this time Buccleugh was almost hysterical. In all my life

African Adventures

I've never seen a man laugh so hard. Solomon said: "Poor devil," then, abruptly, he too began to laugh.

I had the boys wrestle the hippo to a spot under a tree and directed its cutting-up. An hour or so later, O'Connor came over to say "good-bye". He remarked:

"I think O'Toole's going down with fever. He's got the boys breaking camp. Says he's off to the States the quickest way."

So we told O'Connor what had happened.

Yes, liquor on safari has created funny situations, but usually too much liquor results in trouble—often accident or tragedy. White Hunter Ira Wisdom had a client, with jitters after a five-week drunk, who shot himself through the head when a red spider fell into a cup of coffee he was drinking.

Most shooting accidents on safari are caused by liquor, as are many safari break-ups. It was liquor—good, old, Portuguese *aquarenta*, that was responsible for one of the most highly dramatic safari mix-ups I ever experienced.

Death lurks beside every African jungle trail, and the Dark Angel frequently delights in making a fool of a man before seizing him. Every professional hunter knows this. When things began to go haywire on safari, the hunter knows that, nine times out of ten, blood will flow and skulls will crack before the fleshless prankster is put to rout.

So, I knew something of what to expect when, on June 18, while fording the Chiambo River in north-eastern Angola, I led Hans Seimens, a young German archaeologist, and our nineteen porters, into the midst of hundreds of swarming, poisonous water snakes.

The porters, their bellies filled with grated manioc (tapioca), and happy with my promise of hippo meat for supper, had laughed and sung, with loads balanced on heads, as they followed me thigh-deep along the ford.

About half-way across, we began wading round the end of

Nightmares in the Jungle

a small island that shouldered the stream. As I cleared the island's tip, I was suddenly surrounded by a writhing, wriggling mass of light-green, blunt-nosed, stub-tailed serpents that had been feeding on the monstrously-bloated body of a dead hippo. The carcass, covered with scum, was held to the island's bank by an overhanging bush. The snakes, frightened by my abrupt appearance, twisted and shuttled in all directions. Some squirmed towards us, heads high, eyes glaring coldly, tongues darting. I tried to side-step them, slipped into a hole and went in over my head.

Close behind me, Bembe, my head porter, yelling in terror, slapped at the serpents. One sank its teeth in his finger. Bembe whipped his arm frantically, but the snake hung on.

The rest of the carriers, panic-stricken, dumped their loads and beat it back to shore. I struggled back to the ridge of the ford just in time for the dead hippo, swinging clear of the bush, to bump into me. I jabbed at the distended belly with the muzzle of my rifle. The barrel sank deep into rotting flesh. I jerked the gun clear and was promptly sprayed with a stream of liquid putrefaction. Gasping and retching, I ducked under the surface again. When I came up for air the carcass, gas hissing from the hole in its guts, was ten yards downstream, slowly deflating. I waded ashore.

Seimens was kneeling beside Bembe. The other carriers had vanished into the trees. Seimens had slit Bembe's finger and was sucking the wound. He spat out a mouthful of venomous blood. I took his place, cut the wound deeper and packed it with permanganate of potash crystals from the small first-aid kit I always carried in my haversack.

Seimens, who'd been about to step into the river when the porters had stampeded, had been knocked down in the rush, trampled on and generally roughed up. He'd controlled himself while aiding Bembe, but now he really let go. He cursed the

African Adventures

porters, damned the snakes and almost wept over the dunking of his precious baggage. He said:

“It is finished. I have lost everything. I . . .”

“Come on, Seimens,” I said, “let’s get the loads out of the water.”

We worked for an hour lugging stuff ashore. Seimens seemed whipped. I felt sorry for him. A college professor in Germany, he’d scrimped for ten years so that he could finance a one-man archaeological expedition to a mound of skulls near Taba, in Angola’s Canza district. He’d wangled a leave-of-absence without pay, bought tools, instruments and camping equipment, and had landed in Mossemedes broke—still almost 1300 miles by trail from his journey’s end. When, over a bottle of gin, he’d told me his story, I’d impulsively offered to guide him without charge.

At dawn, March 4, with nine Huambas and ten Mundombes as carriers, we’d gone east to the Cuanza[•] River, north to Kwanza, then east along what is now the right-of-way of the Benguela Railroad, to the Chiambo River. We’d followed the river north, and at sundown on June 17 had camped 75 miles below Canza, having made roughly 1200 wandering miles in 105 days. We’d had no more than usual troubles—swamps, mosquitoes, a little fever, rains, hot sun and some mountain climbing. And we’d had some mighty pleasant stretches.

Seimens had been a happy man as we’d broken camp beside the Chiambo on the morning of June 18. His life-long dream was about to come true. Then—the snakes.

Now as I threw down the last rescued bundle, I looked at Bembe. He was dead.

We opened the load containing shovels; dug a grave and buried Bembe. I said to Seimens:

“The porters won’t be back. Swarming water-snakes are one of their most dread superstitions. One of these days we’ll

Nightmares in the Jungle

send their wages to their chiefs. In the meantime, I've got to locate a native village and a *chef do posto*. The Government will force natives to act as carriers in a case like ours."

Seimens didn't answer. He prodded loads until he found the one containing *aguardente*. He opened it, exposing twenty-four quarts. He uncorked one, tipped it and let the liquor gurgle down his throat. Someone grunted. A squat, dark-brown native with white eyelashes stood at the edge of the brush staring at the bottles on the open tarp.

"You're a Ka-Konga?" I asked.

He looked at me sideways with eyes like a lizard's, as he replied:

"It is true, *Illustrissimo Senhor*. I am Chicreta. I am a *pombeiro* (trader). I want *aguardente*." He pointed to the bottles.

"Get me twenty *carregadores* (porters) and I'll give you a whole bottle of *aguardente*."

"Will you pay eight *angolares* (about 25c.) a day?"

"Six *angolares*."

He turned towards the brush and shouted. Immediately twenty-three husky Ka-Kongas strode into the clearing. "Carregadores," Chicreta said, and reached for a bottle. I let him take one and thereby opened a door to hell.

Chicreta's men were under such stern control that I guessed he'd been in the army. He had a constant thirst and kept begging for *aguardente*. Refusals invariably turned his weird eyes dead-black.

The next five days were through gameless country and the porters grew sullen from meat-hunger. The sixth day I told them to rest in camp while I went hunting. Seimens stayed to guard the baggage. I made a three-mile sweep into a small valley without raising so much as a hare. I hit the river again about five miles from camp and worked along the reeds until I spotted a small antelope drinking. Climbing a high rock near

African Adventures

the river's edge to get a better shot, I slipped, threw out my arms to prevent a fall and dropped my rifle into the water.

I stripped, waded out a few feet and went in over my head. I dived, scraped the mud bottom with my hands, came up, dived again and again. The only result was to stir up slime; my rifle was gone. That .303 had been my pet, and I felt pretty low as I returned to camp.

Seimens, sitting beside the dead fire, looked up when he heard my footsteps. His eyes were swollen almost shut, the bridge of his nose broken, his face smeared with dry blood. Porters and baggage were gone. He said dully:

“They've stolen the loads. Chicreta beat me with his fighting-stick.”

I helped him to the river and washed his face. The cold water snapped him out of it. I said:

“Where's your rifle?”

“One of the porters took it.”

“Okay,” I said. “Lie down and rest a while. I'll be back.”

I walked into the trees to think. No rifles. No ammunition. No baggage. A gang of really bad natives controlled by a drunken leader. The nearest Portuguese authorities one hundred and fifty miles away at Henrique de Carvalho. The renegades were heading, I figured, for the Congo border.

Disgusted by my incompetence, I think I'd have quit had it not been for that blighted look in Seimens's eyes. I hurried back to camp.

“Okay, Scimens,” I said, “let's get going. I think Chicreta's heading for the Congo. I'd like to catch him before he crosses the border. Belgian police wouldn't like what I'm going to do to that guy.”

“Chicreta's a killer,” he said.

“Chicreta's crazy,” I answered.

Feeling naked without my gun, I took up the porters' spoor.

Nightmares in the Jungle

As I'd guessed, they'd turned due east. The Congo border was less than one hundred and twenty-five miles.

Within an hour we found the body of one of the porters, Chacahanga, lying beside the trail, his head bashed-in by a bottle. His load, chiefly scientific instruments, lay unopened near his feet. In a small leather bag that hung from his neck I found an out-dated army labour-company pass. It had been signed by *Sergeant Chicreta Kahinga*.

That solved the puzzle of Chicreta and his twenty-three carriers. He'd deserted the army with his whole squad.

We hid the pack, buried the body, slept, and in the morning, picked up the porters' spoor again. It was easy to follow and every six hours or so we'd come to an empty *aguardente* bottle. Evidently Chicreta wasn't sharing the liquor.

During the next four days Scimens and I ate only what we could get with our hands—a cobra, fish scooped from shallow overflows of creeks we passed, frogs, a hare I knocked over with a stone, mushrooms, odds and ends of berries, wild manioc, the hind ends of hundreds of black ants.

Shortly after noon on the fifth day, when less than thirty-five miles from the Congo border, the spoor turned abruptly north. We followed it, puzzled by Chicreta's evident change in plans. Within a mile I became more puzzled, for an elephant's spoor showed up and there'd been no elephants in that area for years.

Even more bewildering, the elephant tracks overlay those of the porters', and the spoor of a woman overlay that of the elephant. I concluded that an elephant and a woman were following Chicreta's gang. It was fantastic—impossible. I wondered if I'd gone a little crazy.

The tracks led across a sandy flat, through an almost brushless glade and to the edge of a grove. Here the porters' tracks became a jumble of milling prints. An empty bottle stood against a low bush. Then the porters had fallen into line and

African Adventures

marched again, skirting the trees. The woman and the elephant had turned off into brush.

“Seimens, these tracks tell a story that only a Pygmy could read,” I said.

“I am weary and sick. How far ahead is Chicreta?”

“About ten miles.”

“We come upon them. What then?”

“God knows,” I said. “Something. I’ve been hoping he’d get too drunk to . . .”

The trunk of an elephant appeared above a bank of brush. The brush parted and the big beast pushed into the open—a yellow-skinned native on its head. Following, came a black-skinned woman, bent and wrinkled.

The elephant was very old. His skin was warty and loose. As the beast shuffled to a stop before us, the man slid to the ground. The old woman threw herself on her knees, wrapped her arms round my ankles and began to kiss my feet. I helped her up, pushed her aside and said to the man:

“Speak.”

“*Illustrissimo Senhor*,” he said, “you have come. I will now get back Opudo, my wife. She is beautiful, O Father, and I would not have her to be also the wife of the snake-eyed Ka-Konga who has stolen her. Furthermore . . .”

“Wait. Who are you?” I said.

“I am Senza. I am the husband of Opudo. The *pombiero* and his *carregadores* came. The snake-eyed one saw Opudo as we stood aside to let them pass. He took her in his arms and would have raped her, but instead, drank from a bottle. Then he tied her hands. All of the *carregadores* are in my house and one stands outside the door with a gun.”

“The one you call Snake-eyes is not a *pombiero*. He is a thief and a murderer. How can your hut hold so many?”

“My house is not a hut, *Senhor*. It has much room for I have

Nightmares in the Jungle

many palm trees and gather much oil. I am the husband of Opudo. She..." His voice broke. He held out his hands and said:

"She is beautiful, *Senhor*. Do not let her become the wife of..."

"Tell me about this elephant, *Senza*," I said.

"I was my elephant's keeper in the forests of Congo, O Father. We pulled trees that had been cut down. My elephant is ancient. When I was discharged from the work-corps they would have shot him as too old to work. We loved each other, the elephant and I. I begged the Major to give him to me. The Major laughed and gave me the elephant and together we came into my own country and I married Opudo."

The old woman wailed. I said: "Be quiet," and she stopped.

"Where is your house, *Senza*?" I asked. "How long have the *carregadores* been in your house?"

"My house is in the forest, O Father. It is not far. They took Opudo at sunrise while we were gathering wild fruits. They have been in my house since the tree shadows were the length of three men."

"About seven hours. Have you a gun, *Senza*?"

"My gun is within the house, O Father."

"We'll help you, *Senza*, but first, I must think."

I walked off by myself and sat in the shade of a bush. After a while I had *Senza* take me to his clearing and I peered out from behind a shrub. Our baggage was piled at one side of the house. A porter sat on his haunches before the door, Scimens's rifle across his knees. The house—about twenty by thirty feet—had window-openings at the sides. I moved so that I could see the back wall. No windows were there.

The house was made of saplings plastered with dung and mud. The roof was reed thatch. From inside came drunken laughter and loud curses.

When *Senza* and I got back to Scimens and the old woman, the elephant was snorting and coughing, holding his trunk high

African Adventures

and backing around in a circle. Senza cried: "Quissondes," and sure enough, army ants were streaming in a narrow band across a patch of bare earth.

"Will your elephant obey orders, Senza?" I asked.

"He is an obedient child, *Senhor*."

"Could we sneak him up behind your house and have him push through it?"

"He would put his forehead against my house, but he would not push, O Father. He has been taught that a hut must not be hurt."

"If he'd smash through your house, Senza, he'd rout the *carregadores*. They'd rush in all directions. I'd fell the man with the rifle, and with it in my hands, I could handle a hundred Ka-Kongas."

"My elephant will not push my house, O Father. Furthermore, he might crush Opudo, my wife."

"Would you rather Opudo were dead, or the wife of that...?"

"Dead, *Senhor*," he said hoarsely.

The old woman squawked like a chicken and poured dust on her head.

"Seimens," I said, "you'll stand in front of the house, hidden among the trees. You'll do something to attract the attention of the man with the rifle. Shake bushes. Grunt. Anything."

"Old Woman, you will stay here."

"Senza, you, the elephant, and I will sneak up behind the house. You will tell the elephant to put his head against the house and push."

"He will not push, *Senhor*, as I have told you."

"The elephant will push, Senza," I said.

"Get going now. Take up your positions. I'll be along. When I'm ready to start things, Seimens, I'll give a bird call. Like this," I said, and whistled.

Seimens nodded and followed Senza and the elephant.

I got the empty liquor bottle from beside the bush, picked up

Nightmares in the Jungle

a small stick, walked to the army ants and began pushing them into the bottle. A few of them scrambled up my arm, sticking what seemed like red-hot needles into me. The pain was intense. Sweat burst out on my forehead.

I managed to get forty or fifty ants into the bottle's neck.

When I reached Senza and the elephant in the bush directly behind the house I gave my bird call, waited a few seconds, then stepped to where I could see the front of the house. The native with the gun stood staring towards the brush.

I hurried back to Senza, said: "Co'ne on," and tiptoed across the clearing. Senza followed silently. Even the elephant's big feet made no noise.

We stood within five feet of the back wall of the house. It seemed that Chicreta was now sharing the *aguardente* with his followers, for many talked at once, some voices drunkenly shrill. I nodded to Senza.

Senza pulled his elephant by an ear and whispered an order. The elephant put his head against the wall and curled his trunk back between his front legs. That was all.

I pulled the cork and held the ant bottle upside down over the elephant's upturned trunk-tip. Nothing happened. I banged the bottom of the bottle as if it were catsup.

The elephant suddenly sat, lifted his trunk and screamed. Then he lunged to his feet and banged his trunk repeatedly against the house. Mud flew; saplings splintered. The big beast dropped his backside, turned completely round and backed through the wall. With the thatch falling about him he sat down, lifted both front feet, trumpeted, got up and whirled round and round.

Shrinking Ka-Kongas scrambled from the débris. The elephant's trunk grabbed one, lifted and banged him hard against the wreckage. Natives scattered in all directions, some stumbling as they ran.

African Adventures

The guard ran, too, dropping the gun. I got it, checked the chamber, then ducked as the elephant tossed part of the roof within a foot of me. I heard Senza yell, and whirled to see Opudo racing for the trees with Chicreta hard after her. Praying that the gun was zeroed correctly, I led Chicreta's ankles about a yard and squeezed the trigger.

He went down with a bullet through a foot.

It was a nice mêlée. Seimens chased natives with part of a tree-branch. Senza rolled on the ground with two of the porters. The elephant's screams were continuous as he smashed his bleeding trunk against an old wood stove.

To save him further agony I shot him through the heart. He stood still for a second, then collapsed head-first, burying his tusks deep in the earth.

A stone bounced off my back. I turned in time to duck another stone hurled by a porter. He rushed me. I jabbed him in the stomach with the muzzle of the rifle. He bent double, his chin near his knees. I tapped the side of his chin with the rifle butt. He stretched out on his stomach, muscles of his calves quivering. He was out cold.

That was the end. Seimens came into the clearing without his club. Senza stalked back ahead of Opudo. We dragged in three injured porters and two who'd been killed by the elephant. All the others got away.

Senza took a letter to the *chef do posto* at Henrique de Carvalho and returned with twenty carriers and a note asking me to report to the police at my convenience. We were less than sixty miles from Seimens's graveyard of skulls at Tabá, and, considerably older-looking than when I'd met him, Seimens went off with the new carriers to do his digging.

I turned Chicreta and Chacaiombe, the porter, over to Senza and Opudo to hold for Portuguese authorities, and then I took off for Henrique de Carvalho to buy a new rifle!

WITCH-DOCTOR "MAGIC"

NEAR THE CUCHIBI RIVER in Eastern Angola, I sat on a stool beside the low "door" of a Mucassquere hut. Batu, a greying, snaggle-toothed "witch-doctor", squatted at my feet. A naked two-year-old girl, face shiny from recent washing, was playing nearby with pebbles, when suddenly one struck Batu on the forehead. He growled like an annoyed baboon and the little girl ran for protection to her mother who was boiling water in a black, cast-iron kettle at an open fire.

The baby flung her arms about her mother's bare legs and peeked at Batu. Then edging towards the fire, the child slipped, and in her fall she clutched the edge of the kettle upsetting the steaming water all over herself.

I picked up the shrieking youngster, saw that she had terrible scalds on her face, chest and one arm.

There was a cry of "Ow!" from Batu as he picked up a glass bottle that held my drinking water. He broke the bottle on a stone, selected a razor-sharp, shell-shaped fragment, cut a deep gash in his forearm and let the hot blood pour over the scalded skin of the baby. Almost at once the little girl's screams subsided. Her agonized writhing ceased and she lay quiet except for her stertorous breathing. With gory fingers, Batu spread the flowing blood to even the smallest burned areas.

The mother whimpered and wrung her hands, but the calm

African Adventures

Batu commanded: "Bring a newly-washed, white cloth, woman."

The mother returned with a clean flour sack, with which Batu carefully bandaged the scalded areas.

"The baby will sleep much," he said, "Give her milk when she is hungry. Do not let her scratch. The cloth is to keep off flies. Do not remove it. I will return when the cure is complete."

Three weeks later he removed the cloths, revealing pink, new skin where the scalds had been.

"No scars," I exclaimed, in amazement, as I examined the baby's body.

Batu gave me an odd look. "Many times I have told white doctors how blood, warm and fresh from the veins puts out fire in flesh." They say, 'Yes, yes, Batu,' but they do not believe. Yet, this has been known to Mucassqueres since the moon gave birth to the first man." Well, seeing is believing.

Once in Kitchini country I sprained an ankle so severely that I was ill with pain. A witch-doctor, Capogoni, rubbed my leg, ankle and foot with dirty-looking, grey salve, then bound the sprain snugly with strips of soft antelope hide. During the night the pain diminished and the swelling receded so much that the bandage had to be re-wound. That sprain got well much faster than any I had suffered before. Capogoni refused to tell how the salve was made, but he gave me a snuff-box full of the stuff. When I got back to Johannesburg, I asked Old Doc Brennan, a former British army physician, to analyse it. A few days later, he pronounced it to be "*Extractum solani liquidum*."

"In plain language," explained the Doc, "that is potato salve. Raw Irish potatoes mixed with oil. You can buy it at the chemists and it's as good as anything ever devised for relieving swellings in sprains, gout and lumbago. Contains potash salts--the healing ingredient."

"Doc," I said, "a Masai *laibon* (witch-doctor) once cured a

Witch-Doctor "Magic"

client of mine of tapeworm when all the white doctors' efforts had failed. How do you suppose he did it?"

"Patient probably wouldn't follow orders," the Doc said. "I'll bet the *laibon* gave your client crushed pumpkin seed to eat, and restricted other foods."

"Yes he did—for three days," I replied.

"Sure cure for most intestinal worms," commented the Doc. "Pumpkin seeds contain olein, palmatin, stearin, glyceride of linoleic acid . . ."

I broke in. "Listen Doc, I have a hunch. If I collect native medicines, will you analyse them for me?"

"A hunch that native medicine is pretty much like white medicine? But sure I'll do what I can—maybe learn something myself."

And that's how I began cultivating witch-doctors—good ones and evil ones. I met and questioned scores of them from chiefs of the Masai Engidongi Clan that supplies all witch-doctors for the Masai tribes, to the human-flesh-eating witch-doctors of the Fang of French Equatorial Africa.

I think my associations with African witch-doctors were the most interesting of my African experiences. As my understanding of native methods of healing grew, so did my knowledge of White healers. I came to realize that, in basic principles, the "Medicine" of Blacks and the therapeutics of Whites have much in common. I am convinced that both white and black physicians achieve more cures through "faith", than through drugs. Ninety per cent of the "drugs" prescribed by healers of both races have little virtue in themselves, but are of value psychologically. As one witch-doctor said:

"I give sick man white water—no get well. I give him red water—get a little well. I give black water with big stink—man get well slow. Give man black water with big stink, make dance in lion skin, beat devils with two sticks and make screams

African Adventures

and screams—man get well *quick*.” And, similarly, a white physician once told me: “I have patients with varying diseases for whom I prescribe coloured water. It benefits most of them because they *believe* it will, but some patients find no help in pleasant-tasting water. They must have it bitter, so I add something to pucker their tongues and they, too, improve.”

An Ovampo witch-doctor once confessed to me that he cured many diseases by the simple expedient of cutting off little fingers and “letting the devils run out”, a method of surgery that seems to give point to the statement of an American surgeon recently that he’d removed normal organs from eighty women because no amount of argument could convince the women that the organs weren’t diseased in some way.

One of the world’s leading physicians once essayed the opinion to me that practically every disease from which humans suffer is “mentally-originated”. “The list,” he said, “includes stomach ulcers, colitis, haemorrhoids, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, asthma, hay-fever, allergies, most forms of indigestion, headaches and general miseries. This doesn’t mean,” he went on, “that because a disease is mentally-inspired, it is less real. But, it does mean that the cure must come through the mind.”

African natives of some tribes eat the hearts of leopards and lions in the belief that they will thus acquire bravery and strength, and some Americans and Europeans eat fish, believing it to be a “brain food”. It is scientifically demonstrable that lion’s heart does not stimulate courage, nor does fish have any particular stimulus for the brain, yet, lion-heart-eating Zulus under Chaka were Africa’s most courageous soldiers, and thousands of white students declare that even small amounts of fish in the diet keep the mind clear and active.

The Reverend Norman Vincent Peale, one of America’s most publicized preachers, an advocate of prayer, employs

Witch-Doctor "Magic"

psychiatrists, psychologists, and religious counsellors to build up patients' faith. He gets results, as do osteopathy, chiropractry, Christian Science, spiritualism, astrology, application of appliances, drinking of mixtures like radio-active waters, and psychoanalysis. So do African medicine men and witch-doctors. But, so far as I can learn, faith cures fail when it comes to virus, and deficiency diseases. These require antibiotics, and vitamins. When a man needs Vitamin A, he gets more of it from a single carrot than he could get from all faith cures put together, according to Old Doc Brennan. "But," says the wise old medico, "all the vitamins in the world won't cure arthritis resulting from mental disturbance."

Well, I'm no authority on these things, but I've learned that, except in one phase, medicine men and white physicians begin with the same basic concepts. The exception is that orthodox doctors use hygiene. I believe that, if African medicine men employed effective antisepsis in their methods, the percentage of cures would be much higher than it is already.

Modern faith-healers adjust their vocabularies, procedures and gadgets to the minds of their patients, which is precisely what African witch-doctors do.

Unhappily, the African witch-doctor has been built up in the public mind as a wild, vicious, devil-possessed charlatan which, of course, is not true. The sincere and kindly native practitioners far outnumber the evil-doers. Just as kindly white physicians outnumber the quacks and exploiters.

I've known witch-doctors who believed they were controlled by evil spirits, and I've known a few who advocated—and practised—cannibalism. Native African witch-doctors have quite a pharmacopœia of drugs and medicines that for centuries have proved beneficial. Most of these "drugs" are compounded from vegetables, fruits, herbs or flowers. For erysipelas, some witch-doctor-healers rub the affected parts with an ointment

African Adventures

made from bean flowers and pods. A tea made from the green bark of the bean plant is often given to reduce fever.

For gravel, four cupfuls of boiled beet juice each day.

For influenza and some fevers, an hourly dose of salted liquid from boiled red peppers with some palm wine added to it.

A brew of boiled celery—not less than a quart a day, is prescribed for rheumatism.

Flaxseed is used widely for poultices in pneumonia, pleurisy, boils and abscesses. Boiled juice of garlic is a preventative of scurvy, syrup from dried grapes is taken for dysentery and olive oil for gall-stones.

Syrup of onion-juice and sugar is good for sore throat, and also for easing the pain of burns and scalds, while taken in hot milk it is a remedy for sleeplessness.

Pumpkin seeds beaten to a pulp and mixed with milk is the witch-doctor's favourite cure for intestinal worms. In small quantities, it serves as a gentle laxative.

Scores of other native remedies are equally simple and, according to chemists, the valuable ingredients in most of these medicines are linoleic acid, oleic acid, enzymes, B-amylase, urease, uricase, d-limone, linseed oil, diallyl disulphide, allylpropyl disulphide, malic and tartaric acids, oleuropein, olein, palmatin, allyl sulphide, stearin, glyceride of lanoleic acid, Vitamins A, B, C, E, and niacin.

Like most humans, I'm always impressed by things I don't fully understand, so I'd probably have faith in the curative powers of a mixture labelled "diallyl disulphide and allylpropyl disulphide", but if the label merely read "oil of garlic", my faith in it would have to be fortified by psychoanalysis, or perhaps the drum beats and cavortings of a witch-doctor.

The evil witch-doctors spend little time attempting to cure diseases; their activities are almost entirely political or religious. They claim supernatural powers and the ability to bring death

Witch-Doctor "Magic"

to whom they choose, and so potent is the element of fear which they can arouse that their victims often die when placed under a "spell". Evil witch-doctors flourish in the Engidongi Clan of the Masai tribe and so powerful is their influence that the British have quarantined the Engidongi on the Loita Plateau. The Engidongi supply all *laibons* for other Masai clans in Kenya and Tanganyika. A *laibon* is primarily a witch-doctor, but he is also a chief. He takes orders from the quarantined Engidongi leaders, and is supposed to be immortal, except when a curse is put on him by another *laibon*.

Masai tribesmen fear their *laibons* so much that they dread even to look upon them but they gladly pay them high prices for charms assuring prosperity and fertility. Engidongi leaders direct cattle raids, and take a percentage of all cattle stolen. Through the *laibons*, the Engidongi leaders tell tribesmen how they should react to British rules and regulations. A tribesman under the curse of a *laibon* almost always dies—of self-induced fear.

There is a weird mixture of beliefs and cults among the Kikuyu tribe of Kenya. I know some of its leaders, and I've met Mau Mau organizers. Witch doctors are wrongly blamed for much of the unrest among Kikuyus; the trouble-makers are native religious leaders who have organized cults with such names as The Men of God; Cult of the Holy Ghost; Cult of Jesus Christ; Cult of Msambwa. Their teachings are a hotch-potch gathered from Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, Salvation Army, Methodists and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The *Witu Wa Mungu* (Men of God) consists of two branches, one of which observes Saturday as the Sabbath; the other, Sunday. Their leaders are known as *Arathi* (prophets), who resist everything modern, including sanitation and disease-prevention. Like the *Dini ya Jesu Kristo* (Cult of Jesus Christ), the *Dini ya Msambwa* (Cult of Msambwa), and the *Dini ya Roho*

African Adventures

(Cult of the Holy Ghost), the Men of God want to see white men driven from the country. In a general way, their slogan is: *The time has come. Let us wash in the blood of white men, and of black men who oppose us. Why do we wait?*

Many of Kenya's African leaders secretly belong to one of these cults and thus, politics combine with religion to create Africa's greatest threat against white supremacy. Such an unholy combination is the Mau Mau.

In Basutoland, a mountainous British colony in South Africa, witch-doctors are the pawns of 1300 chieftains who call themselves the *Sons-of-Moshesh*. Moshesh founded the Basuto tribe about 1830. The *Sons-of-Moshesh* fight bitterly among themselves for power. They murder innocent relatives and either eat some of the victim's flesh, or mix it with blood and seasonings as a salve. To the *Sons-of-Moshesh*, power doesn't necessarily mean political power. Many of the murders—and I know of more than one hundred—are committed to assure success in unimportant undertakings. The most gruesome aspect of these killings is that the flesh must be cut from the victim while he still lives.

While the witch-doctors do not commit these murders—they are done by "friends" of the chiefs involved—they do, however, boil up the "good-luck" pastes—with appropriate incantations.

The British authorities have tried to stamp out this savagery by hanging some of the culprits but in 1952 alone there were at least fourteen known "medicine" killings.

I once lived within eighty miles of Maseru, Basutoland's capital, and I met and talked to many witch-doctors. They all lived in fear of the *Sons-of-Moshesh*, and did the Sons' bidding, but they were essentially not bad men. If authorities could get rid of Head Chieftainess Mantsebo, and slap down the *Sons-of-Moshesh*, most witch-doctors of Basutoland would become

Witch-Doctor "Magic"

what they'd prefer to be—simple medicine men and healers.

Most African medicine men and witch-doctors have detailed knowledge of many poisons, and the formulas for mixing poisons are handed down from father to son, and from cult teacher to pupil. The formulas are supposed to be secret, but almost every native knows them. To make poison for arrows and spears, you should boil the smaller branches of the trees *akocanthera friesiorum*, or *ancanthera venenata*. When the liquid has become blackish and gooey, wipe a band of it round your arrow a couple of inches *behind* the head. When fresh, this poison will kill an elephant within an hour, a smaller beast within minutes. However, the poison soon becomes dry and brittle unless covered with a wrapping of thin hide. The older the poison, the slower its action, so if you want to do a really quick job of killing, add a little sap from the shrub *sapium madagascarensis*, but be careful—one drop in an open scratch will start your blood foaming in your veins, and when the foaming blood reaches your heart—you've had it!

Another equally deadly poison is made by mixing the entrails of the deadly *ngwa* caterpillar with the juice of the euphorbia tree. This poison is a favourite with Bushmen.

Other poisons much used in Africa are, a brew made from wild foxglove, *strychnos* and *strophanthus*, and the poison glands of snakes and scorpions. Because it supposedly brings painless death, a poison made by soaking the yellow flowers of the *ngotuane* tree in water is often used for special cases. The victim just tightens up until there's no movement left in him. The desert rose, whose pretty white and pink flowers cheer the wastelands of East African deserts, is the source of a poison almost as virulent as that made from the *akocanthera* trees.

Poison is not the medicine man's only lethal weapon. You can medicate a man to death as did the fourteen physicians who attended King Charles II. One, a Doctor Scarburgh, has left

African Adventures

this account of the treatment the King was subjected to when, on February 2, 1685, he was taken with a convulsion and became unconscious. It is as primitive as anything the witch-doctors of Africa think up.

First, a pint of blood was taken from veins of one of the King's arms. Then he was bled again, from a shoulder. He was given an emetic, then a purgative, and later another purgative. This was followed by an enema containing cinnamon, cardamom seed, linseed, saffron, camomile flowers, fennel seed, aloes, cochineal, beet roots, mallow leaves, violets, rock salt, sacred bitters, and antimony. Came another enema, and another purgative. The King's head was shaved, a blister raised on his pate, and a sneezing powder administered. Several purges followed, then drinks of barley water, liquorice, sweet almond, wine, absinthe, anise, and brews of thistle leaves, mint and ruc. Plasters of pitch and pigeon dung were bound on his feet. More bleeding and more purges followed. Then came medicines that included dissolved pearls, melon seeds, gentian root, nutmeg, quinine, manna, slippery elm, cloves, flowers-of-lime, cherry water, lily-of-the-valley, peony and lavender. These were topped with about a teaspoonful of *extract of a human skull!* To the surprise of his medical advisers, Charles's condition didn't improve so he was given Raleigh's antidote—a concoction made from more than fifty ingredients, and he was also made to swallow a besoar stone (gall stone of a goat). Lastly, the physicians administered their most powerful combination—Raleigh's antidote, pearl julep, and ammonia, and this saved all further experiments.

The King died.

Nearly three centuries later, in Africa, an Ovampo chieftain named Andahe, taken with convulsions, was treated by a witch-doctor named Angero. Andahe died, and Angero was taken into custody by German South-west Africa officials on a charge

Witch-Doctor "Magic"

of murder. He gave the judges the following list of ingredients he had used in his medicine.

Owls' eyes, crocodile dung, viper's flesh, toad skin, a monkey hand and a hawk's head—all boiled together. Angero strained the concoction and administered the liquid. But he was acquitted because the judges held that he had given his patient nothing but a nourishing soup.

When I showed the recipe for Angero's "soup" to a noted dietician in one of America's Veterans' Hospitals, he said:

"So far as nutrients are concerned, that soup is equal to most soups we serve our patients. Even the crocodile's dung would have some food value. Boiling would kill any unhealthy germs."

In the matter of nutrition, cannibalism supplies satisfactory salts and proteins. However, most African cannibalism—and it does exist among a few tribes—is only occasionally the result of a need for food. Some tribes eat their dead as a form of ritual to appease the ghost, while others eat human flesh because it's supposed to have magical properties. Nearly always cannibalism is indulged in as a part of tribal ceremonial rites and responsibility for the practice must consequently rest on the shoulders of witch-doctors. Among the Fan people of French Equatorial Africa, certain ceremonial routines require the eating of human flesh that has been buried for some time—fresh flesh is taboo.

To me, the most fascinating phase of witchcraft is what I call the "hyperphysical". The manifestations I've seen and experienced are almost beyond belief—as are some of the things I've been told.

Dr. Clifford Nance, who was in Africa studying witchcraft, once related to me the following story:

"Sukumbana was a Zulu witch-doctor. He was about fifty—tall, lean and cadaverous; talked little, groaned much, and

African Adventures

liked to be called 'Tony'. He had 'cast the bones' for me several times, and had foretold incidents of a minor nature. One night as we sat beside his fire, he said: 'I look at the bones, but I do not see them. My spirit goes through the Hole and talks to your spirit. That is how I know.'

"'Could my spirit also go through the Hole, O Magician?' I asked.

"'Yebo, You-who-are-Young. But you must tell your *ehlose* (spirit) the things you wish to know when it goes beyond the Hole.'

"Tony was serious, but I was having a joke. I said:

"'I will tell my *ehlose* that I would talk to a spider, or something.'

"Tony groaned, said: 'Ai! Ai! Ai!'—spat on his palm, threw the bones on the ground before him, groaned again, got to his feet and said: 'Come.'

"I followed him into the darkness until we were beyond the sounds of the *kraal*. We stopped a few yards from a large *moepel* tree that seemed a monster shadow. Tony told me I must now breathe deeply. 'Deep—deep,' he said. Still regarding it all as more or less a joke, I took deep breaths until I felt dizzy. Then Tony said: 'Sit and rest. Think only of a giant spider.'

"Almost immediately, I got a strong mental picture of a great spider with twelve-inch legs.

"'Stand and breathe deep once more, *Umganaam* (friend),' Tony commanded.

"I began taking more deep breaths. As I puffed like a grampus, Tony told me I must think of the air as strong wine; that I must feel the wine flowing in my veins; must *picture* the wine pumping to every part of me; must feel the wine in the tips of my ears, toes, fingers. Sure enough, I began to tingle throughout my body. Indeed, I felt a bit drunk, and I was no longer joking.

Witch-Doctor "Magic"

"'You are weary, *Umlungu* (white man). You will sleep. Come,' said Tony.

"Then as he led me to my hut and watched me roll up in my blankets, he exclaimed: 'When you shut your eyes, you will pass through the Hole. The spider awaits you. My spirit has talked to her spirit.'

"'Her spirit?'

"'Yebo, O Venturesome One. She is the mother of all spiders.' Tony tried to snuff the candle with his fingers, but didn't put it out. I saw him lift a foot to step through the door . . .

"Howling winds awakened me. I was in a galvanized-iron shack somewhere in the Kalahari Desert. Sand hissed and whispered against the sheet-iron walls, and the hut echoed with the noise of something banging on the door. I loosed the latch, and the wind sucked the door open with a clang. As I struggled to close it, something brushed past me—something shaped like a man. He was followed by two shadows that scurried beside his feet like mobile dinner plates. I got the door shut, and lighted a candle.

"My visitor was a man—shriveled and wrinkled, with sunken eyes, cheeks and lips. He wore dirty clothes much too large for him.

"He peered about into the corners of the room, making coaxing noises, as if to a dog. I remembered the 'shadows' that had come in with him. He knelt, look'd under the cot, and whined: 'Come here, you.' Getting no response, he shrilled: 'Damn your blood! Come here!' and then from under the cot came a giant black spider. It was twice the size of any I'd ever seen. It was hairy, and its eight high-elbowed legs spread at least twenty-four inches. Belly to floor, the beast moved draggily, as if against its will. I jumped up on to a chair.

African Adventures

“The candle-flame flickered as if blown by a breath. Outside, the wind carried voices. Sand hissed continuously against the metal walls. The old man grasped the spider with eager, claw-like fingers and sank his yellowed teeth into the beast’s abdomen. He sucked the creature dry and threw the deflated carcass to the floor where it lay with legs curled tight against the body.

“I leapt for the door, and had the latch in my hand when I was jerked back by a powerful arm. The old man was no longer old, but hale and vigorous. His body had filled out its clothes. The face was sanguine and haughty. As I backed against the wall, he cried:

“‘You came through, you fool. Why did you come through?’

“‘I don’t understand,’ I gasped.

“‘The Hole. Why did you come through?’

“‘A joke,’ I said. ‘I thought it was a joke.’

“‘So did I—long ago. Now I am what I ^{am}.’

“‘Are you dead?’

“‘Neither dead nor alive—a cacodemon—an incubus—a slave to *Gita*. Compelled to forestall complete death by drinking the blood of spiders. So you will be.’

“‘No,’ I said. ‘It was a joke. This is a dream—I just now fell asleep.’

“‘Come,’ he said, and opened the door.

“The wind had died. Clouds scudded blackly across a lopsided moon. I stepped ahead of him into the night. He pushed past me, to lead the way and at his heels scuttled the other giant spider. As I followed over sand ridges, I tried to wake myself, by shaking my head and slapping my face. It hurt, but I didn’t waken. *I wasn’t asleep.*

“We walked in silence beneath a moon that seemed to race across the sky. A lone hill like a monstrous ant-heap loomed

Witch-Doctor "Magic"

before us. My guide pulled aside bushes and uncovered the opening of a cave. Then he took my hand and led me in to absolute darkness.

"After a while, light gleamed ahead—a phosphorescent glow. The air was warm—humid. It smelled of rotting leaves and stagnant water. Abruptly, we moved into a room seemingly without limits. I knew we were in tropical country because I watched snakes and lizards scurry out of our way—reptiles that lived only in the marshes below the Bambuto Mountains of Nigeria.

"Everywhere were giant spiders. They flashed like wind-driven leaves across the cave floor. They crouched and stalked mice and toads—and worms like grubby serpents. My guide began to shrink. His trousers folded about his ankles. I watched the skin wrinkle on the back of his neck, and grow old and dead. He scooped up the big spider at his feet, sucked it empty—and was a 'man' again.

"There were others like him around us, but I saw them as in a fog. Occasionally one reached down, grabbed up a spider and gorged. We stopped at the edge of a circular sandy stretch. What I thought was a blackish-brown hummock, rose on hairy legs and looked at me with glassy eyes set close to a horny beak. My guide said: 'Gita,' and moved away from me.

"I stared at *Gita*, and once again tried to waken. I beat my nose with a fist, I scratched my cheeks, I stamped my feet. Blood trickled from a nostril and I watched it drip on my shirt.

"Looking again at *Gita*, I saw she was a monster. Her legs spread at least four feet. She breathed through holes in her sides, and over the holes between her last two pairs of legs were covers that fluttered as she breathed. Men—demon men—came between us carrying a naked, chocolate-brown, dead body, its face covered by a green, cloth mask. The men laid the body on the sand before *Gita*. Then they moved out of my vision.

African Adventures

“The dead native lay on his back. *Gita* lowered her body and moved forward with beak poised as if about to rend the dead flesh. I yelled: ‘Let me see his face.’

“*Gita* leaped backward, turned, and ran, then she stopped like a checked hunting dog, apparently listening.

“Then I heard it—a terrifying clanking of armoured land crabs. They moved towards us—thousands of them—purple, and so damp that they seemed to be sweating. They moved jerkily, eyes protruding on little sticks from their heads, claws wide open, waving aloft, the string-like ‘palps’ waving and twitching at the sides of their mouths.

“They surrounded the corpse, pinched bits of flesh from the body and sat back, stuffing it into their mouths.

“*Gita* scurried off in terror.

“Suddenly the place was deserted except for the crabs—the corpse—and me.

“‘The face!’ I screamed again. ‘I want to see the face! I think I know who . . .’

“Then I opened my eyes. The candle still burned in my hut. Tony was gone.

“Three months later,” Dr. Nance continued, “I received a letter from my partner, in the French Cameroons. One of our favourite safari boys—a Hottentot named Jim—while ill with fever, had been bitten by a giant spider, had become delirious and had rushed out into a swamp. They found Jim’s body almost entirely eaten by land crabs.

“No, my ‘dream’ hadn’t been a telepathic demonstration—Jim hadn’t died until twenty-eight days *after* I’d ‘gone through the Hole.’”

Another weird witch-doctor-inspired experience was that of Charlie Weems who, back in the nineties, freighted goods by ox-wagon from Portuguese East African ports to miners and prospectors on the Rhodesian side of the mountains.

Witch-Doctor "Magic"

Weems had lost two outfits during bad storms on the Hump, and was almost broke when a Chibisa ox-driver suggested that Weems buy a protective charm from a certain Nyasaland witch-doctor. Weems did, and from that day forward until he retired rich, Weems's wagons were conducted over the Hump by a small, shadowy figure that met them wherever danger threatened. The figure invariably rode astride a lead ox, and disappeared when danger was past.

Weems, telling the story, said that the "figure" never spoke, and vanished if a human moved within thirty feet of him. Weems "knew" that the little protector was a ghost.

OF BIRDS, MEN AND CATS

ACH YEAR INCREASING NUMBERS of scatter-gun addicts flock into Kenya, Tanganyika, Congo, Uganda, Angola, French Equatorial Africa, and parts of Rhodesia, to indulge in bird shooting that for variety and excitement cannot be equalled anywhere else on earth.

Game hunters are not noted for reticence in matters of the chase, but are given to vocal marathons in which the game grows faster, larger and more dangerous with every telling. Wing-shooters, who, world over, outnumber all other types of hunters, are a different breed. They're usually secretive as to when, where and how they get their bags.¹ This is one reason why the general public knows little about the joys of African bird shooting.

It could be that bird hunters can find no adequate words with which to express their emotions as they watch hour-long flights of yellow-throat, pin-tail, and black-face sand grouse rocketing towards them low under a dawn sky. The water in the big shallow-banked pan lies brownish-grey and still in the morning light. Scattered trees and shrubs that line the waterhole's edges have crept out of the night to assume the weird shapes and dusty robes they'll wear during the hours of sunshine. Out of nowhere a flock of hundreds of sand grouse—the size of small pigeons—comes scooting, dodging and ducking. They fly straight at the gun, fearing neither hunter nor the roar of his piece. Over the pan the birds circle, then, as one, whistle into a

Of Birds, Men and Cats

plummeting dive. No sooner is the first flight settled than another sweeps in. Then, a third flight, a fourth, a fifth . . . On and on they come from all directions, and they keep coming—sometimes for an hour-and-a-half.

The first time a man watches a *quarter-million* sand grouse flashing over his head like feathered bullets he can be so over-powered by the multitude that he doesn't fire a shot. Even if he remains unhypnotized, he gets no birds the first day because he's reluctant to slaughter them at point-blank range. He soon learns, however, to concentrate on trailing and scattered birds. This makes for real shooting, for the little aerial speeders can jink out of the line of fire quicker than a man can press a trigger.

No bag limits are imposed on African birds, and only two or three colonies require a licence fee—usually a nominal one. However, scatter-gun enthusiasts are sportsmen, and I've seldom been on a shotgun safari where hunters killed more birds than could be eaten. This permits a big bag, however, for hungry native porters and camp boys can consume a lot of grouse.

Then, there's the kori (greater) bustard—the world's largest game bird. He stands four feet high and weighs from thirty to fifty pounds. He is long-beaked, long-legged, long-bodied, and as difficult to stalk as an impala. Even at close range the average shotgun load does little more than tickle the big fellow. He flies strongly, and few men have got one on the wing with a shotgun.

On open veldt the kori bustard can see for miles, and stalking him requires that a man take advantage of every bit of cover, and snake through grass on his belly like an over-fed monitor lizard. Even expert stalkers may spend days vainly attempting to get within .22 range of the wary devils. I've known hunters to become so exasperated by continued failure that they finally bagged the quarry with a .375—even a .450. Not sporting, but understandable, for no true bird hunter wants to leave Africa

African Adventures

without having his picture taken with a greater bustard that he, himself, has shot. It's quite a picture—usually the hunter and a native, holding up the bird with wings outspread—eight to nine feet.

I don't know how many species of bustards there are in Africa, but I've seen seven. Tastiest are the lesser bustard, the Arabian bustard and the European bustard. These run heavy to white meat, and when properly cooked, are superior to chicken. The kori bustard is excellent-eating too, but not when fresh-killed. Hang him for forty-eight hours, however, or let him soak in cold water for twenty-four hours, and you have a tenderized version of American turkey that will leave delightful gustatory memories. When kori hunting, be sure to take along a couple of the largest covered pans that you can get. Cut the kori into pieces, brown in hot fat, season and bake covered until done.

Around his neck, the kori bustard wears what looks like a stocking that's been pulled over his head. The "stocking" hangs loose and empty at the base of the throat. In mating season, the kori bends his head back to his tail feathers, inflates the stocking into a ball and thus presents a picture that is certain seduction for any member of the opposite sex who sees it.

One September I took a shotgun party of three to a bush-scattered savannah north-west of Stanleyville. Near six large, yellow-flowered acacia trees we found ruins of what long ago had been a European's home. The housewife had planted a garden, and over the ruins were growing pink and red roses, orange San Carlos vines and lavender bougainvillea. Nearby, great clumps of pink and red geraniums sprawled beside stands of pink-and-red-flowered bamboo. A little way off, yellow canna lilies ran wild.

Our natives cleared out briars for a camp-site, and we pitched our pup tents among the rioting flowers.

Of Birds, Men and Cats

My clients were a Scotsman named Robert Thompson, an Englishman named Howard Fowler, and a twenty-one-year-old English boy named Cyril Taylor. Thompson and Fowler were in their thirties, solidly built one hundred and eighty pounders. Both had served several years in the ranks, and on leaving the army, had gone into business and done well.

Cyril Taylor was an oddity. He weighed about one hundred and forty-five pounds, was slender, grey-eyed, blonde-haired, and painfully diffident.

On his twenty-first birthday, he'd written Nicobar Jones, saying he'd reached his majority and wished to go on a "strenuous and difficult" hunting trip to "try to overcome an unfortunate behaviour pattern imposed upon me by a too-doting mother". The lad had enclosed a cheque for \$6000 as "earnest money".

I was due to meet Thompson and Fowler within five weeks, so we cabled Taylor that, if he cared to join a hunting party, he should meet us at Stanleyville on September 1.

The kid was a ridiculous figure when he arrived. He'd evidently been reading books authored by "Colonel Blimps", for he wore a belted tweed shooting jacket, khaki shorts, rolled heather stockings, low, hob-nailed shoes, a Lincoln-green sport shirt and a white solar topee. Thompson and Fowler, dressed as African hunters should be—in tough khaki shirts, long trousers, heavy army boots and comfortably-battered felt hats—didn't spare Taylor's feelings. As they shook hands, Thompson said:

"Could it be you're a bloody duke?"

Fowler said: "Why, Clarence!"

Taylor flushed, swallowed and mumbled something about "feeling a bit of an ass ever since I put these silly rags on."

I liked the young fellow—I'd guided too many men to be

African Adventures

fooled by appearance. The boy had a straight eye, stood up well and had a chin that promised "guts" in a tough spot.

Thompson and Fowler almost had fits when Taylor opened his baggage and displayed a Lang over-and-under, single-trigger, beautifully engraved, 12-bore shotgun, and a Grant .256 side-lock double rifle. The two pieces must have set him back at least \$2500. They were marvellous firearms—I got a tremendous kick out of just holding them. Both had been fitted to the kid.

Fowler handled the pieces with obvious envy, and handed them back without comment. But the guns aroused a mean streak in Thompson. He behaved abominably towards Taylor, sneering at the boy, insulting him at every opportunity. I could have stopped it, of course, but it was Taylor's problem—he'd work out his own answer.

The day before we left Stanleyville, I took Taylor shopping and got him outfitted with sensible hunting clothes. At the hotel, we stopped at the bar for a quick one. Thompson and Fowler were already there. Fowler looked the kid over, grinned and commented dryly: "Much better."

Thompson recited in sing-song:

"You may br-reak you may shatter-r the vase if you will,

But the smell of the pansies will cling to it still."

Taylor flushed, licked his lips, but said nothing. I had half-a-mind to bawl him out for taking it so meekly, but held my tongue when I noticed his eyes—cold, and calculating. The kid wasn't humiliated—he was icily angry.

Two weeks later, we'd made camp beside the ruined house.

Next day, Thompson and Fowler, with four natives as retrievers, went after quail. Taylor watched them out of sight, went to his chest and, to my astonishment, took out two pairs of six-ounce boxing gloves.

"Mother doesn't know it," he said, "but two years ago I

Of Birds, Men and Cats

started boxing lessons with an old army sergeant who'd been a good man in his day. I became pretty good, myself."

I massaged a glove with my fingers. "How good?" I asked.

"Well, I beat some of England's best amateurs—in the gym, that is. They tell me I've a rather nasty right. I think I have too, but there's something in me that prevents my letting it go. I've never really wanted to lay it on a man, but now I do."

"Thompson?"

Taylor nodded. "I intend to have a go at him."

"Well," I said, "you'd better be good. The guy outweighs you, and you can tell from his walk that he can handle himself." The kid was just too light to take on Thompson. I thought it over a minute, then said:

"Before you tackle Thompson, let's see how you stack up against me." I reached for a pair of gloves. They'd never been used, so I broke their backs and pushed my hands into them. Taylor tied them, and while he put his pair on, I smelled mine. New leather. A good smell. We had a bit of a job tying his gloves, but managed it, mostly with our teeth.

"You're a funny guy," I said, and snapped his head back with a playful left. His left struck like an adder, getting my nose three times before I could slide away—and the third left was so hard that I tasted blood on my soft palate. He stood up well, beautifully balanced, his left out, but a bit low, his right cocked in front of his shoulder.

"You're fast, all right, kid," I told him.

Taylor smiled, feinted, snapped another left. I moved my head enough to let it slide over my shoulder, and he stiff-armed the side of my neck, throwing me off balance. Then he drove his right into my floating ribs so hard that I grunted. I dropped my left, shifted and drove it hard into his solar plexus, shifted again, slipped a left, moved in close and hooked the side of his jaw with a short, hard right. He went to his knees. I stepped

African Adventures

back. He looked up at me and again I saw that coldly calculating stare.

As we sparred around looking for openings, he said:

“You’ve got a right good right yourself.”

“I’m twenty pounds heavier than you,” I said. “It makes a difference.”

“I think I’m feeling my oats. I’ve an inclination to hang a right on you. Curious about it?” he said.

“Hang it on me if you can, but remember, you’re asking for it.”

His left flickered. I drew in my chin. His right shoulder tightened. I figured his right was coming, and let my own right go, thinking to beat him to the punch . . .

My face was in the grass—my hands under me. I pushed hard against the ground, trying to raise myself. Nothing happened. I pushed again. My rear went up, but my face stayed where it was. I made a tremendous effort and rolled over on my back. The kid knelt beside me, his gloved hands pulling at me.

Fresh air suddenly filled my whole body. Strength came back with a rush. I sat up, pushed the kid back and got to my feet. I felt my jaw, found it wasn’t broken, and said:

“It was your right, wasn’t it?”

“I let it go.”

“I’ve fought them all,” I said, “and that’s one of the few times I’ve ever been out. You’re about as good a man as I’ve met.”

Taylor’s face started working and I thought he was going to cry.

Four of our wogs had gone with Thompson and Fowler. Just before putting the gloves on with Taylor, I’d set the remaining eleven boys to gathering wood and dried antelope chips for the fires. Now, as I fooled around camp, paying no

Of Birds, Men and Cats

attention to the boys as they came and went, I heard Taylor say:

“What’s the matter with the silly asses?”

I looked up to see two wood-loaded natives edging round Taylor like dogs that feared they might be kicked. They dumped their loads on the pile and walked past Taylor again, eying him sideways, eyes showing lots of white.

Three other natives came to add wood to the pile. They, too, eyed Taylor as if he were dangerous, and when the kid said: “What the devil!” the three jumped as if stung. When still a third group sidled past, giving Taylor the frightened eye, I called Jumbo, the head boy.

As Jumbo drew near, he wriggled, held both hands above his head, bowed timidly to Taylor and said:

“We have seen, *Bwana*. Now we know.”

I laughed and said: “It is well that you saw, Jumbo. For *Bwana* Taylor’s hands are filled with thunder.” Then to Taylor, I said:

“The natives saw you lay me out. From now on, if you play it right, you’ll be the big guy around here.”

“Certainly a novel role for me,” Taylor commented wryly.

At sundown, Thompson and Fowler returned, sweaty, hungry and fagged. The four retrievers, loaded down with plump European quail and spurred yellow-necks, gave them to the other wogs for plucking. Disliking the job, the boys went at it apathetically.

Thompson stood his shotgun against a tree, dropped his haversack to the ground beside it and called:

“Have the Kaffirs get those feather-rs off faster-r, Jumbo. I’m bloody well famished.”

“Yes, *Bwana*,” Jumbo said.

The boys continued plucking in their slow, deliberate way. Thompson watched a few moments, then said in exasperation:

African Adventures

"The blighter-rs ar-re going to take their-r own sweet time. Might at well give or-rder-rs to a bloody stump."

Turning to the wogs, Taylor said quietly: "Make it fast, men."

You'd have thought every wog had been jabbed with an electric needle. Feathers flew. In minutes, seventy fat little carcasses lay naked on their backs.

Thompson stared from the natives to Taylor and back again, lips moving silently as if talking to himself—his neck growing redder and redder.

Taylor winked at me, snapped his fingers at the natives and said: "I would eat, friends. On with the cleaning."

Never were birds gutted so quickly.

Thompson, who was clearly astonished at this performance, moved to where a basin of water stood on a small packing-case beside his pup tent. As he washed, he splashed, snorted and mumbled. At supper as he gnawed hungrily at bird after bird, he eyed Taylor speculatively, but said nothing. Once or twice when the wogs serving us spoke to Taylor with unusual servility, Thompson nearly choked. When he'd tossed the last bare bone into the fire, he wiped his mouth with a handful of grass, swallowed a tin-cupful of tea, and said:

"Taylor-r, I obser-rve that you've br-ribed the Kaffir-rs. I have nothing to say about it except that if you've put the boys up to making a fool of me, it will be you I'll give the hiding, not the blacks."

Fowler said: "Let's have no talk of hidings."

"I'll no be made a lout of," Thompson said sullenly. "And a hiding is what our-r little fair-ry would have had fr-rom me long ago if he wer-re somewhat mor-re of a man."

Taylor took a deep breath and got to his feet, looking at me questioningly. I shook my head. The kid sighed and sat down again. I said:

Of Birds, Men and Cats

“Taylor didn’t bribe the natives, Thompson. It’s just that they have wholehearted respect for him.”

Thompson turned to Fowler and said angrily:

“So help me God, if this goes on I’m going to tur-rn in my bloody str-ipes.”

Later, when making the rounds to see that camp was ship-shape for the night, I noticed a light in Taylor’s pup tent and pecked in. He was propped on one elbow, reading. Five or six books were stacked as a stand for his candle. I said:

“Slip something on and come out. I want to talk to you.”

He came out on hands and knees, dragging a robe behind him. He put it on and we walked out of earshot of the other tents.

“About Thompson,” I began.

“What about him?”

“He intends to beat you up, when the opportunity comes.”

“So I assume.”

“Look, Taylor,” I said, “it’s all right to go he-man, but Thompson outweighs you at least thirty-five pounds. That guy’s no set-up. He was bayonet-champ of his army outfit. I admit you’re good with the gloves, but with Thompson, it’d be bare hands.”

“Of course.”

“There *is* such a thing as good sense,” I said testily.

“I fancy I’m not too smart,” he said, “but thanks, anyway.”

There was no use arguing—his mind was made up. “Well,” I said, “if you must—you must. But pick your own time, at least.”

“I will. Thanks,” he said, and went back to his books.

The next day, Thompson, Fowler, Taylor, the fifteen wogs, and I, chased guinea fowl—ordinary black-and-white, bluish-headed, wattle-dangling guinea fowl. Chased is the word. The

African Adventures

taunting-voiced birds were everywhere, scuttling about on the open veldt and huddling in bunches in the brush.

Ten of the wogs moved forward in a line, pushing guinea fowl ahead of them. Thompson was at one end of the line, Fowler at the other, Taylor and I in the centre. Behind us came four rifle bearers, for when bird hunting in Africa, anything may pop up—from lion to nasty-tempered rhino. Jumbo, whose dignity wouldn't permit him to hunt birds, brought up the rear.

The line advanced slowly at first, then faster, until the guineas took fright and streaked for cover—hundreds of them. But guinea fowl don't take wing until really hard pressed, so we ran them. The sun was hot and the breeze had died. As we panted after the scurrying birds, dust settled on our sweat-wet faces, got up our nostrils and into our mouths. At the edge of the brush, the guineas lifted into the air with a noise like a cyclone. Guns boomed: feathers flew. Birds collapsed in mid-flight and bounced as they hit ground. Wogs laughed and shouted. Twelve birds bagged out of all those hundreds. A hungry man needs at least one whole bird. Fifteen wogs, four whites. Nine more birds required.

We walked more than two miles before we came on a flock that hadn't been frightened off by the guns. Again, the long line, the walk-up, the chase, exploding shells and falling birds.

Five miles back to camp, with a quick bathe in a small stream en route. A pot of tea while the boys warmed up quail left from last night's supper. Gun-cleaning. An hour of relaxing under the trees, and back out on the veldt again—this time to track down and go through an almost identical campaign with blue-breasted vulturine guinea fowl—the size of small turkeys.

These birds stuck more closely to the brush, and when they rose, it was with thundering wings that carried them every-which-way.



Above: A male lion, photographed by Don Rolph, tearing at a buffalo carcass.
Below: Sneaking up on a lion.



A picture by Don Rolph of a Masai with spear.

Of Birds, Men and Cats

We bagged fifteen—enough for a second day's eating, so called it off and spent a couple of hours alternately dunking in the little stream, and sitting naked in the sun.

As I sat on warm sand, puffing my pipe, shooing flies off my bare shanks and watching the others disport in the water, it suddenly occurred to me that, although Taylor'd carried his Lang over-and-under all day, he hadn't fired a shot. I wondered why. At the first opportunity, I asked him.

"Well," he said, "I've never shot a gun—not even at the Grant and Lang factory. I just haven't been able to bring myself to the point of taking my very first shot in front of Thompson."

"For Pete's sake, why?"

"I can't explain. I cringe at the thought of him laughing at me. Silly, I know, but there it is."

"And you're the guy who wants to go round-and-round with him!"

"That's different. Nobody's going to be laughing then. But to shoot at a bird and miss . . ."

I walked away.

"Right-o," he called after me. "Next time out."

While we ate breakfast next morning, Jumbo signalled to be quiet and motioned us to follow him into the acacia trees. He walked as if stalking, and we imitated him. Beside the last tree, he knelt and pointed to a lone kori bustard standing motionless about one hundred and fifty feet away.

The great bird stood broadside to us, his skimpy, dark topknot hanging down behind his "ears", long, bare legs sticking out from below his heavily-feathered body. He gave the impression of a man wearing a topcoat, but no pants.

I waited while Thompson, Fowler and Taylor went back for their guns. They returned as quietly as Indians, guns loaded.

African Adventures

The bustard, except for an occasional slight fluffing of feathers, hadn't moved. I whispered:

"Fifty yards. Use choke. One shot each, after he takes wing. Thompson first, then Fowler, then Taylor."

They spread out—Thompson to the left, Fowler in the centre, Taylor to the right. The bustard seemed to sense danger for he fluttered his wings a little and turned his head nervously. I threw a stone at him.

He lumbered into the air, headed towards us. The heel of Thompson's gun caught on his right shirt pocket, throwing him off. He made a clean miss. The kori changed direction, increased his wing beat and really scuttled across our front. Fowler fired and got two tail feathers. Taylor pointed his Lang, shut both eyes and pulled the trigger. The bustard, headless, hit the ground in a crumpled heap.

The kid trembled as he turned the dead bird on its belly and spread the enormous wings. I held my steel tape to them. Nine feet, two inches!

"Well bowled, Taylor," Fowler said.

Thompson grunted.

Taylor was embarrassed, and mumbled something about "feeling like an ass". I intended saying nothing to him about the shot being a fluke, but that evening as he lay reading in front of his tent, I noticed his book was *Pickwick Papers*. Reminded of Tracy Tupman, I couldn't resist the opportunity to rib the kid. I said:

"Lend me your book a minute, Taylor."

I flipped the pages, found Dickens's account of the shooting party at Wardle's, and read aloud:

"Tupman," said the old gentleman, "you singled out that particular bird?"

"No," said Mr. Tupman—"no."

"You did," said Wardle. "I saw you do it—I observed you pick

Of Birds, Men and Cats

him out—I noticed you as you raised your piece to take aim; and I will say this, that the best shot in existence could not have done it more beautifully. You are an older hand at this, than I thought you, Tupman; you have been out before.”

Taylor grinned sheepishly and said: “I thought of Tupman when I opened my eyes and saw that bustard thud to the grass. How am I to go shooting with these chaps again, now that they think I’m such a whiz?”

“Maybe if you keep your eyes shut you’ll do all right,” I said impatiently. “What do you care what they think?”

He flushed.

“The truth is,” I said, “nobody gives a damn if you can shoot or not. I’m beginning to figure you out, Taylor. I think you’ve been acting like a sissy all these years only to attract attention to yourself. Snap out of it, kid. You’re as important as hell to your mother, but you don’t mean much to anyone else—not yet, anyway. Tomorrow we’re going after button quail with .22s. First thing in the morning you and I are going out to do a little practice plinking. In half an hour you’ll be good enough to pot those little buttons at fifty yards. And then, you’re going out on your own with Thompson and Fowler—I’m not going along.”

“Decent of you,” Taylor said huffily.

“Go ahead and stamp your foot, now,” I said.

Taylor laughed aloud and pushed his left playfully against my still-sore nose. I shifted left, jolted his stomach with a right, stuck the palm of my hand on his face and pushed him on to his back. He looked up, grinning. He was learning.

After breakfast next morning I handed Taylor my .22, took an empty jam tin and we walked out behind the calla lilies. I tossed the can about fifty feet, showed the kid how to hold the gun, line the sights and *squeeze* the trigger. He hit the tin his first try. He was a natural. I moved the tin about

African Adventures

thirty feet farther out. He hit it five shots out of seven. I said:

“Button quail rise and flutter low for about one hundred and fifty feet. They’re about the size of the jam tin, and look like big fat bumblebees. Idea is to hit them on the fly. Unless you’re a whiz with a .22, you don’t drive birds, you ‘walk them up’. That is, you walk towards a covey until it takes flight. Usually, the birds fly straight away from you. This gives you easy ‘going away’ shots. Pick a bird in level flight and let him have it in the behind. You’re letting your shots off fine now, while plinking at the tin, but chances are you’ll start jerking the trigger when your target’s on the wing. Don’t do it. *Squeeze*. Remember, birds coming straight in, or birds going straight away. You’ll be surprised at the way your .22 will bring ‘em down.”

“Supposing the others want to *drive* the buttons?”

“They won’t—not with .22s. In driving, the guns stand behind low cover. Beaters scare the birds towards you. When the birds are close on the other side of your cover—low shrubs, hedge, or even a solid fence—the beaters chase them up. The birds whir over the cover, spot you and instantly scatter in all directions—up, down, right, left. Pick a bird, lead it, dust it with six-shot; pick a second bird, and a third. If you get three out of a flurry, you’ve done about all that can be expected.

“In a few days we’re going to drive spur-fowl. In my opinion, they’re the sportiest bird in Africa, and there are at least twenty-seven varieties of them. In Kenya, they’re known as ‘yellow-necks’; in this part of the Congo, as ‘red-necks’; most everywhere else, as ‘bare-necks’. I’ve shot them in Rhodesia, Angola, Kenya and Tanganyika. I’ve shot them high in mountains, and in low, dust country. The books call them ‘francolins’, but don’t let that worry you—they’re just quail.”

“You know,” Taylor said, “Jones’s cable, saying I could join a

Of Birds, Men and Cats

hunting party, didn't mention birds. I thought we'd be going after lions, and whatnot."

"Bird hunting's more fun."

"Like hell it is!"

"Well, it is in Africa, anyway. There are so many birds and so many ways of getting them that no matter how many times you go after them, something new and exciting happens."

"Like what?"

"Like seeing 100,000 flamingos in a single flock. They're red and white, but from a distance, look pink. In flight—a great, pink cloud. Standing in water—a mile-square pink carpet. Or, the spectacle of a thousand sacred ibis on an Ethiopian river—white, black-headed with black-tipped wing feathers. When taking off and landing, the sacred ibis' wings make marvellous, curving patterns. Or, the sight of flocks of snow-white, beautiful, dumb, pestiferous egrets of West Africa—once eagerly sought for their plumes, but now only pains-in-the-neck. Egrets can soil more hats in an hour than San Francisco pigeons can soil in a day. If they stayed in water where they belong, they'd be enchanting, but they've got a yen to be land birds, and make a mess of it. They can't judge distance, and when they try to land on a fence, for instance, they miss the top rail with their funny feet and crash squawking to the ground. I've seen them try to land on the ridge of a roof, miss, and burn their bottoms sliding down the slope. Then, there's . . ."

"Hold on a minute. Can you eat flamingos, ibis and egrets?"

"Properly cooked, you'll never eat better fowl than ibis. Flamingos taste a bit fishy if eaten as is, but a young one, packed with stuffing made of fried onions, baked chestnuts, chopped parsley, rosemary leaves, fresh bread, lemon juice and grated lemon rind; then, while roasting, basted frequently with orange juice! It's a dish superior to any goose ever cooked."

"I'm hungry," Taylor said.

African Adventures

“Keep an edge on your appetite until I serve breasts of those spur-fowl I mentioned,” I said. “Rubbed well with canned butter, baked for twenty minutes, basted four times with rich antelope stock and served with sugared sweet potatoes—you’ll think you’re eating poetry.”

“But sporting birds . . .”

“All birds are sporting birds if you make shooting them a sporting affair. Myriads of ducks that nest in the north, fly to Africa between seasons—teal, widgeons, mallards, spoonbills, sheldrakes, Egyptians. African geese—grey, knob-billed, pink-foot, spur-winged, to mention a few—are fast fliers and provide extraordinary shooting. To be appetizing, geese should be cooked like flamingos.

“Small waders are usually wary rascals. Among plovers, I’ve had the best sport with the grey, golden and spurred. The spurred-plover’s the one that picks crocodiles’ teeth. There are black-and-white crows, ravens . . .”

“Crows!”

“Crows are very sporting birds with a small-calibred rifle—and excellent eating too, if hung, or soaked a day or two in cold water. I’ve made many a hearty meal of crow. Then, there are doves, pigeons of all colours from white to green, ardetas, plotuses, starlings, linongolos, and scores of others—all in prodigious numbers—on plains and uplands, along marshes, rivers, lakes, pans and pools. They offer scatter-gun addicts the kind of sport they look forward to when they get to Heaven.”

Taylor sighed. “If I’d known we were going to hunt birds, I’d have brought my dog.”

“Can’t hunt with dogs in Africa. Snakes bite them. Leopards and baboons kill them. Buffaloes crush them. Antelope gore them. Tsetse fly destroys them. Ticks poison them. Crocodiles swallow them. But, natives are excellent retrievers—after you learn how to handle them.”

Of Birds, Men and Cats

"I've been half expecting to see lions or something out on this trip. I've read . . ."

"You'll see them, but not right here. Biggest game in this particular area are duikerbok and hares. But ten miles out, you'll see larger antelope, buffalo and occasionally, elephant. When we go after spur-fowl, you may see all three."

It was after sundown when Thompson, Fowler and Taylor returned to camp with seventy-two button quail. Taylor had bagged fourteen, which was good for a man first time out. From the strained manners of Thompson and Taylor, I judged things hadn't been too pleasant, but nothing was said about it so I asked no questions.

Next morning, however, the trouble came into the open when Thompson, always crabby early in the day, called Taylor a bloody nymph.

Taylor walked over to where Thompson sat at the other side of the fire, took the Scotsman's nose between his first two fingers and twisted it. Thompson roared like a baboon, jerked free, got to his feet and swung a dynamite-packed round-house right at Taylor's head. The kid pulled his chin in and the blow whistled past harmlessly. The next instant, Thompson was flat on his back from a lightning left hook to the jaw. I grabbed Taylor, pushed him to the back of me and said:

"Okay. Bare fists—two minute rounds. Fowler, you second Thompson. I'll handle Taylor."

Thompson said: "I'll kill the bastar-rd."

Taylor grinned.

No grass grew under the acacia trees, and the natives quickly swept away fallen twigs. Thompson and Taylor stripped to their waists and tightened their belts. Thompson was square-shouldered, hairy, heavy-muscled and straight-backed. Taylor had long, smooth muscles and sloping shoulders. The small of his back was hollow. Thompson was angry and restless.

African Adventures

Taylor stood quiet except for a twitching muscle in a calf.

Fowler, who'd evidently read *Tom Brown's School Days*, knelt and made a knee for Thompson. He said: "Now lads, shake hands."

"To hell with that," Thompson said. "Get up off your-r bloody knee," and swung a right at Taylor that, had it landed, would have ended the fight right then. But Taylor ducked it, and drove a terrific hook to the Scotsman's floating ribs. Thompson hit the ground doubled-up, gasping.

I counted: "One—two—three—four . . ."

Thompson got to his feet, stared at Taylor with surprise, stuck out his left, dropped his chin into his shoulder and moved in, jabbing. Taylor backed on his toes, stopped flat-footed and tempted Thompson with out-thrust chin. Thompson's left shot out like a piston. Taylor moved his chin out of the way, and as Thompson's left slid past his ear, crossed it with a solid right to Thompson's cheek. Thompson grunted, and threw a volley of lefts and rights. Taylor back-pedalled smoothly, shooting an occasional left jab.

I glanced at my wristwatch, waited four or five seconds, and called "Time."

No one paid attention. I shouted: "Hey, two minutes!"

Thompson's right cracked high on the side of Taylor's head. The kid went down. Thompson stood over him. Fowler pulled him away. Taylor got to his knees, shook his head, took a deep breath and stood up. Thompson rushed him, but the kid stopped him with a straight left, then left-jabbed the big guy so fast that Thompson couldn't get off his heels. Taylor's right threatened to shoot, but Thompson's shoulder protected his chin. Taylor dropped his left towards the belly, and Thompson swung—a left, this time. It landed high. Again Taylor went down, and again, Fowler pulled Thompson away. I began a count, but at three, Taylor was up.

Of Birds, Men and Cats

I tried to intervene so that they should fight according to rules but I might as well have been talking to myself. They went at it again.

Thompson's left landed squarely on Taylor's nose and blood spurted. Taylor tried to rub it away, and rubbed it into his eyes instead. Half-blinded, he slipped, ducked, parried and danced away from Thompson's swinging fists. But again a solid shot landed—this time on a cheek bone and for the third time, Taylor hit the dirt, but he was up in a flash. By now his right eye had puffed almost shut.

Thompson immediately laid another right on the same spot, followed it with a left to the belly, and when the younger man lowered his guard, Thompson clipped him neatly on the side of the chin. Taylor fell on his face. Thompson drew back, looking relieved. I said: "That's enough," and clutched Taylor's arm.

He shook me off muttering: "Stop interfering, please." Then he wove in close to Thompson, feinted with his left, slipped Thompson's counter-left, pivoted on his toe and threw all the power in his body into a right to Thompson's short-ribs. Thompson was hurt. He gasped, tried to clinch, took an upper-cut, stumbled back on his heels—wide open. Taylor drove a hard right under Thompson's heart, and when the big fellow wilted, banged left and right to his jaw. Thompson folded. I didn't bother to count.

Thompson got to his feet wobbly and foggy, held out a hand to Taylor.

From that moment, the Scotsman was Taylor's loyal, admiring friend.

Both still wore bruises the following Wednesday when an expensively outfitted safari party showed up. First came an old hunter friend of mine, Lennie Gibson. Behind him in single file, boxes and bundles on their heads, came seventy-nine

African Adventures

porters. Behind the porters, two station-wagon-like cars bumped and jerked across the virgin veldt. These were followed by seven 1½-ton Ford trucks with specially-built, prairie-schooner-like bodies. Slouching in saddles on hammer-head horses, three other old meat-hunter friends of mine followed the trucks—Jan Cronje, Garnet Smith and Koos Erasmus. At the end of the procession were a camp kitchen and a pantry.

Beyond the acacias, Gibson gave a command in Swahili, and the porters formed a hollow square. Another command, and each carrier placed his burden on the ground at his feet. Gibson waved his arm, and the porters moved off about fifty yards and squatted on their haunches.

“What the hell!” I exclaimed.

Gibson grinned: “I got ‘em trained, lad.”

The first car pulled up and a greying, heavy-set man stepped to the ground and stood staring at the flower-covered ruins. Then he walked towards them out of carshot.

“Ostrowski,” Gibson confided succinctly.

“Who is Ostrowski,” I asked.

“American Money-bags.” Gibson nodded towards the ruins. “He owns this place. His grandfather’s buried here. Murdered, or something.”

Ostrowski walked back, and we shook hands. His eyes were golden-yellow, his nose large and solid, the handshake firm and confident.

“We’ll try to keep out of your way,” he said apologetically.

“We can move on,” I replied.

“No. We’ll be here only a couple of days.” He motioned to his car. An old man, scraggly-bearded, with only one lone, yellow, front tooth, stepped out. He was followed by a gangster-type husky. To the old man, Ostrowski said:

“All right, Scallion, show us the grave.”

Of Birds, Men and Cats

Scallon looked about as if dazed. The husky lad, obviously a guard, poked Scallon in the back with a finger. "You heard," he said.

Scallon said vaguely: "It's been a long time." He walked to the ruins, cleared away vines where front steps of the house had been, and stared around.

"Those trees are big, now," he growled. "They were little, then," and moved hesitatingly into the growth of wild canna lilies. For a while he kicked about, then stooped and lifted a flat, red rock.

"This is it," he said. "Dig here."

The guard walked Scallon back to the car, shoved him inside and locked the doors. From one of the trucks Gibson got two shovels and a pick and set two natives to work digging.

Cronje, Erasmus and Smith set porters to unloading supplies and putting up tents. Within half an hour the Ostrowski camp was shipshape and comfortable. The camp kitchen's stove-pipe smoked merrily, and canned goods of all descriptions sat on long tables. A white-capped-and-aproned chef with long, black moustaches, was as busy as a bee on a marigold. His name was Jean-Baptiste Flournoy, and he had once been a chef on an Atlantic liner.

From the trucks, natives had unloaded gasoline, kerosene, a five-kilowatt electric plant, two small electric refrigerators, bags of cornmeal, tables, chairs, bathtubs, water sterilizers and coolers, a complete folding darkroom, large metal bins of dehydrated fruits and vegetables—everything, in fact, necessary for plushy living.

Fifty or so porters went out after wood for fires. Cronje, Smith, and native hunters took off to look for meat. Then, after everything was in place, a black-haired, blue-eyed girl, of about twenty, stepped from the second station wagon.

Taylor, Fowler, Thompson, Erasmus, Gibson and I were

African Adventures

chewing the fat about nothing in particular. The girl, in tailored riding-breeches and an open-necked khaki shirt, nodded solemnly to us as she walked past. Then she noticed Taylor, and flashed him a smile. Taylor took off his hat, dropped it, picked it up and fingered his bruised eye. The girl laughed and walked to where her father was watching the natives dig.

“Pamela Ostrowski: nice girl,” Gibson explained.

“Struth!” Taylor said, and followed her.

“It’s no soap, feeding this mob of natives,” Gibson said. “With the drivers and kitchen boys, we’ve one hundred and five of them. Hungriest Kaffirs I ever saw. Average three pounds of meat each, every day. Ostrowski doesn’t shoot animals. Great hand on birds, though. Soon as he locates his grandfather’s bones we’re going to stage a series of bird drives. If you’d like . . .”

Gibson stopped as Ostrowski shouted. I followed him to the millionaire’s side. The natives had uncovered some bones. Gibson motioned the Kaffirs out of the grave and got in himself. One by one, he lifted out the skeletons of five cats, patches of fur holding their bones together. He next uncovered a human skeleton that had fallen apart. He piled its bones, and a toothless skull, on a blanket. I dropped down into the hole and helped Gibson hoist the macabre bundle to the grave’s edge. Ostrowski picked up the skull, examined it and put it back on the blanket. He said:

“My grandfather was eighty years old. He was murdered because of the cats.”

Gibson turned each cat over with a foot. One had been black, one yellow, three grey. Suddenly I thought of Pamela. This was no sight for her. I needn’t have worried—she and Taylor were fifty feet away, standing face to face. I said to Ostrowski:

“Was the old man really murdered?”

“Not a finger was laid on him,” Ostrowski said, “but he

Of Birds, Men and Cats

was murdered just as surely as if he'd been shot. We'll have Scallon repeat the story later. Scallon helped with the killing. That was forty-five years ago when Scallon was nineteen."

That night Ostrowski invited Gibson and me to his tent to sit in on his questioning of Scallon. Before the old fellow arrived, Ostrowski said:

"I was a poor man until three years ago, when oil was found on my farm. Scallon, who worked here as gardener for my grandfather, came to my office in New York one day and told me he could prove that Jan Ostrowski, my grandfather, had been murdered. He wanted money for the information and I bought it.

"I decided to come here and check Scallon's fantastic tale. He refused to accompany me, so I brought him along under guard. He had previously told me about burying cats with my grandfather—so that part of his story has been proved.

"Grandfather and his young wife, Hilda, fled Poland because of political antagonism. They settled in Belgium, became prosperous, migrated to the Congo, built this home and settled down to a peaceful life. Grandmother raised flowers—and cats."

The guard brought Scallon into the tent, pushed him into a folding-chair directly under the bare electric bulb that hung at the end of a dropcord. Ostrowski, Gibson and I sat opposite so that we could watch his face as he talked. The guard lay down on a camp cot.

"I won't say another word until I know what you're going to do with me," Scallon growled.

"Tell the truth—all of it," Ostrowski pleaded, "and I'll take you to Stanleyville, give you some money and turn you loose."

Then the old man talked, his lone tooth jiggling against the darkness of his mouth. "My father and I," he said, "were hired through an employment agency. Father was to manage the house and do the cooking. I was to help Mrs. Ostrowski in the

African Adventures

garden. Everything might have worked out all right if my father hadn't hated cats. He even liked to torture them.

"One day Mr. Ostrowski caught my father poking a sharp stick in one of his cats through the bars of its cage. Mr. Ostrowski hit my father over the head with his walking stick and ordered him never to go near the cats again.

"That night my father told me he was going to kill Mr. Ostrowski. He said he'd figure out a way to do it without leaving any clues. A long time passed, but my father didn't forget that blow on his head. Every so often he'd tell me he was still trying to work out a fool-proof murder scheme.

"Mr. Ostrowski was old—more than eighty, I guess. He was very fat, and every morning he'd sit sunning himself on a bench at the east side of the house, and there was always a cat in his lap. Even when he was asleep, and snoring a little, he'd be patting the cat. If he stopped patting, the cat would dig its claws into the old man's leg. Mr. Ostrowski wouldn't open his eyes, but he'd puff out his lips and start patting again.

"Then, Mrs. Ostrowski died suddenly, and Mr. Ostrowski collapsed. I went for the doctor, who examined Mr. Ostrowski and said he had a bad heart and might pop off any minute. He told my father to avoid giving the old man any kind of a shock. 'Humour him,' the doctor said. 'Don't let him get worried or angry.'

"After the doctor had gone, my father told me that he planned to kill the cats, and that the shock would probably kill Mr. Ostrowski. But my father liked to torture people, too, so he didn't kill the cats right away. He would go to Mr. Ostrowski and tell him how good cat-meat pies were, and stories about people who ate rabbit stews that were really cat stews.

"Old Mr. Ostrowski would scream at my father and bang the floor with his stick, which made my father laugh.

"The older Mr. Ostrowski got, the more attached he became

Of Birds, Men and Cats

to his cats. One big yellow cat slept with him. A black one slept on a chair beside his bed. The others were kept in cages at night because of prowling animals, but they ran loose during the day. Mostly, they hung round old Mr. Ostrowski's feet, rubbing against his legs and mewling up at him. I forgot to say that Mr. Ostrowski raised only male cats. He wouldn't have females on the place, so whenever my father went to town, he would bring home a female cat and turn it loose behind the house. Sometimes the male cats got in awful fights over a female, and old Mr. Ostrowski would go almost crazy.

"One day Mr. Ostrowski had a bad heart attack. My father sent a native to Stanleyville for the doctor. Mr. Ostrowski's lips were blue and his flesh was cold. We were sure he was going to die, but just in case he didn't, my father decided to help death along. He had me put all the cats in a big basket and carry them out behind the wagons.

"Mr. Ostrowski had some rabbits hanging in the desert-cooler. He liked them hung until they were high. When the doctor came, and said Mr. Ostrowski would live, my father decided to have rabbit stew for supper. All the time he was cooking it, he kept laughing and talking to himself.

"When Mr. Ostrowski came round, the first thing he said, was: 'My cats. Where's my cats?' The doctor came out of the bedroom and told my father to bring the cats in the house. My father answered that he didn't know where the cats were. When the doctor told that to Mr. Ostrowski, the old man began screaming and fighting. The doctor yelled for my father, and they got Mr. Ostrowski calmed down. Then Mr. Ostrowski begged my father to bring him his cats. My father stood there grinning. The doctor cried: 'Answer, damn it!'

"My father replied: 'Well, I thought he'd be dead by now, so . . .

"Mr. Ostrowski began to shake. Tears rolled from his eyes.

African Adventures

“Then my father said: ‘I can’t bring them right now, I’ve got to watch my stew. I’ll bring the cats in later.’

“Mr. Ostrowski sat up in bed, whimpering. He held out both hands to my father, and my father said: ‘Rabbit stew burns too easy.’

“Mr. Ostrowski began to choke. His eyes stuck out, and then he fell back.

“‘Where the hell are his cats?’ the doctor shouted.

“‘In their cages,’ my father said calmly.

“The doctor bent over Mr. Ostrowski. He was dead.

“A little later while the three of us were eating the rabbit stew, the doctor said: ‘You know, Scallon, back there in the bedroom I thought for a minute that you’d cooked Mr. Ostrowski’s cats for supper.’

“‘Mr. Ostrowski thought so too,’ my father said.”



Pictures by Don Ralph

Above: A safari line.

Below: Forty-five inch buffalo horns



Miki and Peg Carter, with their near-record horned buffalo.

THE JUNGLE CAN BE FUN

WRITING ONLY OF THE exciting adventures in a hunter's life is like crossing a wide, level plain by leaping from high ant-hill to high ant-hill. There are smaller ant-hills on the veldt, and although less dramatic, I like them better. Miki Carter, and the lion that climbed trees, is a typical instance.

Most lion pictures one sees in Europe and America were taken on the Serengeti Plain in Tanganyika, where lions are tame to the point of absurdity. Serengeti lions even climb trees. So fearless are some lions that they permit humans to approach within a few feet. Martin and Osa Johnson once came upon a family of Serengeti lions devouring a kill. The lions ignored the Johnsons completely, so Martin decided to join them at dinner. He and Osa set up a small folding table, laid plates on it, placed folding chairs, seated themselves and had their picture taken while enjoying a spot of tea less than twenty yards from the feeding cats.

Another time, taking a close-up of a feeding lion, Martin became so impatient with the big beast's benign expression that he drove the animal off, sprinkled the kill with red pepper, and photographed the lion as it spat, sneezed and snorted over the tongue-stinging flesh.

On Miki Carter's first African trip, every penny he owned was invested in his cameras, and he was so concerned about their safety that he instructed me that, in case it came to a choice

African Adventures

of protecting the cameras, or himself, I was to protect the cameras.

One morning we left camp in a wobbly, battered Ford flat-bed, and headed for two large, low-forked trees that stood alone in the centre of a vast, grass-grown prairie. The grass was only inches high, and it didn't seem possible that anything larger than a rabbit could hide in it. The morning was hot, and the partial shade afforded by the two trees was so welcome that we decided to move camp to the shelter of their flat-topped, umbrella-like branches.

A few small birds were the only living things abroad. They were hopping about on a sun-dried zebra carcass that lay partially overgrown with grass, about fifty yards beyond the trees. While I drove back to pick up our meagre outfit, and Kamgwara, our only native, Miki stayed beneath the trees to tinker with a camera.

About an hour later as Kamgwara and I chugged and bumped toward the two trees, Kamgwara, beside me on the cushionless seat, began grunting.

Kamgwara was not a smart native. I doubt if he had the intelligence of an *aardvark*. But he was big and strong, and willingly did the work of three ordinary Kaffirs. He weighed at least two hundred and twenty-five pounds, and every pound was tough muscle. His grunting grew so persistent that I stopped the flat-bed and asked him if he were sick. He pointed to the two trees, and said in Chingoni:

“Ngwenyama.”

“Lion? Where?”

“In tree.”

I shaded my eyes. Sure enough, there was a large, dark lump in each of the low-forked trees. I dug my glasses out of the gear on the truck, focused and saw that the lump in the tree to the left was Carter, and the lump in the other tree a lion.

The Jungle can be Fun

At the base of Carter's tree, his camera lay—one leg of the tripod sticking up in the air.

I headed for the trees, honking the horn, bouncing equipment off the truck at every bump. The lion leapt to the ground, bounded over the zebra carcass, and disappeared. Carter stayed in his tree until I stopped the truck a few yards away. Then he dropped to his feet beside the overturned camera, and fussed over it like a mother over a baby with colic. When he found his camera wasn't hurt, he said:

"After you'd gone, I took off the lens, polished it, set the camera on the tripod and focused it on that dead zebra. That's all it was—an old, dried-up, dead zebra. But when I peeked at the focusing glass, there were two lions staring at me from behind the carcass. Automatically, I began taking pictures. All of a sudden it struck me that I was in a hell of a spot. Next thing I knew I was up in that tree, one of the lions—stretched out like a cat after a bird, stalking towards my camera. I yelled, and the other lion took off across the plain, but that first one—a big, dark-maned fellow, kept right on stalking the camera. When he got close, he put out a paw and slapped at a leg of the tripod. The camera fell over, one leg flying up, hitting the lion under the chin. He growled, and leapt to the fork of the other tree. There he squatted eyeing the camera, and making nasty noises."

"He's now at the back of the zebra," I said. "Must be a big hollow in the ground there. I'll go and see."

"Wait," said Carter. "That lion hates my camera. I'll get a rope from the truck, tie it to the camera, put Kamgwara up in the tree with the other end of the rope, and if the lion charges, Kamgwara can pull my camera out of danger."

While Carter prepared the snare, I checked my rifle and moved so that I could come at the zebra carcass from the side.

When Carter felt sure that Kamgwara knew what to do, he

African Adventures

took his stand beside the camera, grasped the crank and called: "Let's go."

I had taken only a few steps when Kamgwara yelled a warning. I turned to see a light-maned lion coming at me from behind. My bullet hit him as he struck the ground at the end of a jump. He rolled over two or three times, and lay kicking. Kamgwara yelled again. Carter's lion was stalking the camera again, but Carter was grinding away like mad.

Twenty yards off, the lion stopped, lay flat on his belly, drew his hind legs under him, and with head still on the ground, began switching his tail.

Kamgwara, panicky, hauled up frantically on the rope. But in his excitement, Kamgwara left the rope so slack that it formed a loop in the grass beside the camera and, unknowingly, Carter had put one foot inside the loop. As the lion leapt, Carter was suddenly dangled upside down by one foot, the camera twisting and spinning in the air just below him. Evidently nonplussed by Carter's shrieks and Kamgwara's roars, the lion skidded to a stop just as Carter, his foot free of the rope, fell with a thump a yard from the lion's nose.

In a single leap, the lion was back in his tree, out the other side, and in a flash he was bounding across the plain as fast as he could go.

Looking dazed, Carter got to his feet, and motioned Kamgwara to lower the camera. He sighed with relief as he discovered it was undamaged.

"Whew!" was all he said.

THE ADVENTURE OF Captain Wilson, Ubusuku, and the punch-drunk rhino really started because the girls of Italian Somaliland are trained for love. Many of them are beautiful, ranging in colour from black to cream. Adept at love-making, they're the most sought after prostitutes in East Africa, and many a

The Jungle can be Fun

wealthy playboy has paid large sums to acquire a lighter-coloured Somali girl as a mistress.

Captain Butler Wilson, Ubusuku, and I were hunting along the Guaso Nyiro, west of Lorian Swamps. Wilson, about sixty, limped badly because of old leg wounds, and although in considerable pain at times, he never complained. He was after big tusks, and big crocodiles but he was not interested in rhino.

One stuffy, airless afternoon we were sitting beneath a dom palm on the north bank of the river, eating figs out of cans. The only greenery in sight was the fringe of trees along the river. The plain to the north was flat and dry, here and there were dusty, grey thorn bushes. Downstream, a six-foot crocodile, with snout out of water, watched a thin Boran cow stepping down to drink. Through a gap in the palm trees, I saw the tail end of a herd of slowly-moving zebras, and directly across from us, a rhino walked to the river's edge to drink.

Wilson suddenly remarked: "I've heard that powdered rhino horn is an aphrodisiac."

"At your age!" I chided.

"No, no," Wilson said, flushing, "not for me. I've a friend who's just taken a Somali girl as his mistress. I was thinking it might be a good rag to send him a rhino horn."

"Powdered rhino horn isn't really an aphrodisiac," I told him. "I've sold a lot of them for that purpose, though—to a dealer in Mombasa. He ships them to India."

"Damn it! I *know* they're not an aphrodisiac. I merely want to pull his leg."

I looked at the rhino, estimated the distance at three hundred and fifty yards, and suggested that Wilson try to pot it from where we sat. He got his .505 from the wagon, set the sights and knelt for the shot. Before he could press the trigger, the rhino wheeled and trotted away.

There were two gerenuks waiting behind the wagons to be

African Adventures

skinned, and I wanted the job done before they got too high.

"You and Ubusuku get the rhino, Captain," I said. "You won't need me along. Rhinos aren't particularly dangerous in open country. If this fellow should charge, remember that a shot anywhere in the foreparts will turn him."

With the help of two Boran boys, I got the hides off the gerenuks, and as Wilson had by then been gone almost an hour, I got my .303 and took out after him.

As I approached a small clump of brush, a rhino rose to its feet, walked into the open and then stood moving his head nervously from side to side, occasionally tilting his horn so that he could peer past it. From a grass clump about seventy yards beyond the rhino, Wilson rose, aimed and fired. The rhino staggered a few paces, then began trotting in a tight circle. Wilson limped closer, fired again. Suddenly the rhino wheeled and went after Wilson at a gallop. Wilson turned to run, his game leg collapsed, and he sprawled in the grass, his rifle hurtling off.

Ubusuku bounded out of the brush. I took aim with my rifle, but lowered it as the rhino went to its knees and flopped over on its side—dead. As a second rhino came full-tilt out of the brush at Wilson, he got up, clutched his game leg, then again fell writhing to the ground. Running to pick up Wilson's rifle, Ubusuku got between me and the rhino. He spoiled my shot by running to the rhino and, with Wilson's heavy .505 in his hands, racing along beside the brute.

Wilson got to his feet again, but fell. The rhino had just lowered his head for the thrust when Ubusuku, clubbing the rifle, banged the beast's horn with a tremendous swipe. The rhino went down, but in a second he was up again. Once more Ubusuku banged the horn and again the rhino went down. Wilson, who was less than twenty feet away, tried hopping on

The Jungle can be Fun

one foot. The rhino struggled to rise, but went flat again as, for the third time, Ubusuku crashed the rifle barrel against the front horn.

I came up running, put the muzzle of my .303 against the side of the rhino's head just under the rear horn.

"Don't shoot," Wilson cried out.

I stepped back from the rhino as it got groggily to its feet.

"He's a game old boy," Wilson shouted. "Let him go."

"What about your friend's love life?" I jeered.

"One Somali girl—one rhino, eh?" Wilson called as the rhino, still punch-drunk, ambled into the brush.

I've seen rhinos knock themselves out by barging horn-on into trees, and I've seen them knocked cold when a bullet tipped the front horn, but that was the first and last time I've seen a rhino knocked stiff with a club.

SHARIF WAS A CAMEL. Most camels are stupid, sullen and vicious. Sharif was all that, and cross-grained, insolent, malicious, dirty and dangerous, to boot. He hated me with awesome intensity. Yet, he worked well after he'd received his daily morning beating.

I don't approve of beating animals, but camels are different. No amount of sweet-talk will get the average camel to his feet once his load has been strapped on. Even while loading is going on, he'll spit, cry, howl, sputter and bite. Some are worse than others, of course, but almost all refuse to move until given several hard bangs with a stout stick.

Sharif began shenanigans the moment he got the idea he was to be loaded. He'd kneel, all right, then roll a cud up his throat the size of a cricket ball, and hold it in his mouth. Then he'd moan and mutter, groan and sputter until you forgot yourself and stepped too close to his head, whereupon he'd spit that nauseating, soft, green cud smack into your face and spray

African Adventures

your clothes with a mouthful of stomach juices. If you weren't careful, he'd then bite you for good measure.

While Sharif moaned and cried, we'd place his "saddle pads". On them, would go rugs, then a wicker frame. Next, four red, wooden water pots would be hung from the "saddle"—two on each side. On the frame would go the load, and over that, my folded tent, strapped on like a tarpaulin. When all was snug, I'd yell:

"*Goom!*" (rise).

Sharif would howl like a banshee.

"*Goom! Goom!*"

More howls, and Ahmed, my camel boy, would rush up waving a stick, shouting:

"*Goom, you son of a dog! Goom!*"

Sharif would stop howling and begin to whine. A few blows on the flank and Sharif would howl again—this time loud enough to shatter the heavens. Then he'd heave to his feet to stand sputtering and blubbering. If you didn't know it was only a pose, you'd have felt sorry for him. I felt sorry the first time I loaded him. He stood so apparently heartbroken that I stepped close to pat him, and he promptly kicked me in the stomach. I've been kicked by horses, but none ever dumped me so violently as Sharif did that day. And that wasn't the end of Sharif's insults that morning. When I got my breath back, I grabbed Ahmed's stick, and with fire in my eye, approached Sharif from behind. He put out the fire by immediately urinating on me from between his back legs!

Having thus established our future relationship, Sharif and I got along fairly well. He spat on me, kicked or bit me whenever he got the chance, but once under way, he carried his five hundred and fifty pounds load more or less cheerfully. Sharif could outwork any other camel in the caravan. He would do thirty miles a day across the hottest, driest sands, and

The Jungle can be Fun

go without food or water for eighteen days, before commencing his thirst cry. After a prolonged waterless spell, he would drink fifteen gallons without lifting his head, lie down for an hour, then come back to the pan and drink another ten gallons. Contrary to popular belief camels don't store water in their humps—those humps are pure fat. Water is stored in the muscles. During semi-starvation periods, the hump fat is used as food, and as it's absorbed, the muscles release water. When Sharif's hump got soft and thin, he'd replenish it by only three weeks' grazing. Most other camels require at least three months.

I owned Sharif only during a two-month trip I took through the country between Marsabit and Buna. I was with a British army officer named Closset, who was making a survey of Northern Frontier District resins and woods. When the job was done, I sold Sharif to Aly, an East Indian friend of mine who ran a little trading post at Buna. But that wasn't the end of my association with Sharif.

A few months later I stopped at Buna en route south to Archer's Post. While I stood near the well, watching the watering of cattle, camels and goats, and half-hypnotized by the chanting of the bucket passers, Ahmed, my former camel boy, rushed up, and shaking my thumb hurriedly, began to weep.

I saw that he was thin and weakened, I enquired: "Have you tick fever, Ahmed?" Almost everyone gets tick fever at Buna sooner or later.

"My camels, my goats, my wives and my children are dying of thirst near the yellow-sand pan," he wailed. "A bandit sheik—a French Somali—will not let them drink until I pay him money—and I have no money. I came to Buna to find police, but there are no police—and my children die."

"Come with me," I said, and led the way to Aly's store.

Waterhole bandits—usually Somalis who prey on their own people—are the meanest robbers on earth. Nomad Somalis

African Adventures

with families and flocks wander through brush so hot that white men find breathing difficult. It is at night that the caravans move—searching for grass so sparse that it sometimes seems that if one less blade grew a beast would die. Somali camels, particularly during long, dry spells, are always thirsty. They drink, rest and plod away on their eternal hunt for grass. Seldom do they get more than seven days away from pan or well, for fourteen days is the average camel's limit without water.

At Buna there is only one well, and day and night, water is passed up from underground in camel-hide buckets, poured in a trough while camels, goats and cattle drink in relays. Day and night, the bleating, bawling, howling and crying is continuous—as caravans arrive and depart.

Almost always when a family arrives at water, it is touch and go—one more day would be one day too many. Robber sheiks wait at outlying pans for caravans in such straits, and extort the last possible farthing for permission to drink.

"Lend me a fast camel," I demanded of Aly.

He grinned, and pointed inside a wire enclosure where Sharif lay on folded legs, his long-lashed eyes shut, his jaw working rhythmically.

Sharif opened his eyes, saw me and began to howl like a coyote. Then he broke off, rolled his cud up his throat and spat it at me. I ducked just in time.

Sharif howled and cried all the time he was being loaded, and when I crawled atop the load, he almost broke his snake-like neck trying to bite my legs. An unusually hard beating was required to get him to his feet, but once up, he moved off swaying, resignedly.

The pan was eighteen miles out. Its water was dirty, and warm. Lolling under a tree was a lone Somali, whose eyes shifted from me to Ahmed's animals farther back in the brush.

The Jungle can be Fun

“Have you rested?” I enquired brusquely.

He glared without answering.

“You will be late at Wijir,” I said. “You had better go.”

He sneered.

“Get out of the way, to let Ahmed’s cattle drink,” I commanded. “They do not like your smell.”

Several of Ahmed’s smaller children, all boys and all naked, moved in close with wide, frightened eyes. The Somali pulled at his beard, got to his feet and in a quiet, almost polite voice, damned the children, their forbears and future offspring to hell. Forgetting his dignity as his anger mounted, he began waving his arms just as Ahmed, who had followed me on foot, came up. Ahmed yelled something, and four teen-age boys came to his side. Then Sharif, who had been eyeing the robber with increasing distaste, opened his lips and shot sprays of spit right into the Somali’s face. At a signal from Ahmed his four sons began pummelling the Somali. As I rode away, the bandit was skirting the pan in a frenzied lop, and Ahmed’s cattle, goats, camels and children were all drinking from the pan together.

It was dark when, back at Aly’s, Sharif knelt to let me dismount. A camel boy unsaddled him and as I turned to loosen the wire gate, Sharif kicked me hard between the shoulders. Perhaps it was just his way of saying “Good-bye”.

I STOOD ALONE IN the Congo dusk, one degree north, twenty-five degrees east. Pink-and-copper clouds, deserted by the sun, were losing their colours like dying fish. The moon, full-bellied and pumpkin-yellow, floated upwards from behind a purple hill. Scattered thorn trees turned from grey to black. A lone antelope, knee-deep in darkening grass, for a few moments, was pink in the fading light. It was Christmas Eve—in the West of Africa.

African Adventures

I gathered twigs and dry grass into a mound, and placed five dry-rotted logs on top. I put a match to the leaves, and a ribbon of flame wriggled snake-like through the kindling. I went to a nearby tree, took down a young zebra haunch, cut off a thick steak, speared it with a stick, and held it close to the blossoming fire. A toad hopped on to my foot, then into the flames. One of the logs began steaming. A scorpion, angry tail held above its back, rushed out from one end of the log, scurried to the cooler end, then tumbled off into burning twigs.

The moon, now almost white, seemed to be drawing farther and farther away, but millions of stars that had seemed distant and feeble, now came closer, as if let down on strings.

As so often when loneliness came, I had a weird feeling that I had drifted from America to Africa like a toy balloon that escapes the hand of a child. There seemed no logical reason why I should be out here in tropical Africa's moody silences—and alone.

The zebra steak sizzled, but I was no longer hungry. I dropped meat and stick into the fire, watched the resulting bomb-burst of sparks, moved back a bit from the heat, sat on my folded blanket and thought of men in the world's distant places—alone on Christmas Eve.

I remembered an army camp fire in South-west Africa and a young lieutenant reading bits from *A Shropshire Lad* to his platoon. And another night in the Cameroons when another young Britisher, who had been brooding for hours, got abruptly to his feet, and quoted:

"Name me no names for my disease,
With informing breath,
I tell you I am none of these,
But homesick unto death."

I remembered Benny Cashmore, one-time corporal in the Tenth Royal Grenadiers, who one night in Angola, delirious and dying, stopped tossing and moaning, to sing:

The Jungle can be Fun

“I remember Polly, hanging up the holly,
And the . . .”

Benny paused, listened, whispered hoarsely:

“Give me a thousand yards of barbed wire, and ~~six~~ Mills bombs, and I’ll take the Western front”—then fell back—dead.

The immensity of Africa around me aroused strange emotions. I felt growing resentment toward Nicobar Jones, who had taken the wagons and Kaffirs and gone off to Murchison Falls, leaving me to guard some gear and await his return. I dug a stub of a pencil from a pocket and began writing a verse beginning: “Alone! Alone?” Altogether I was having a fine time feeling sorry for myself when I noticed that the night noises had ceased. I listened intently and then faintly, but clearly, I heard a voice raised in song—a Scotch voice, a drunken voice—an *American* song.

Excited and startled, I got to my feet and yelled: “Ahoy!”

“What-ho! What-ho! What-ho!” came the answer.

The singing continued, words garbled by a liquor-thick tongue: “On the banksh of the Washbank far-r away.”

Abruptly, the singer was within the circle of firelight. A little man with a big nose, a rolled pack low on his back, and a bottle of whisky, half full, in his hand. He took off his pack, offered me the bottle and said:

“If you’ve a wee bit meat not too well done . . .”

“Banks of the Wabash,” I said, “not Washbank.”

“R-richt, y’ ar-re. Washbank it is. You’r-re an Amur-rican. So was Louis. That bit meat now?”

I cut another steak from the zebra haunch and began to broil it on a stick. The stranger said:

“Louis taught me that song. My name’s David Roger, and I’m dr-rinkin’ my way acr-ross Afr-rica. I could see your-r fir-re.”

“It’s Christmas Eve,” I said.

African Adventures

Roger looked at me strangely, then said:

“It is. It is. Ah, me! Louis’ll be home by now. He always wanted to be home. Place called Detr-roit. Poor-r Louis. Ah, well, hand me the meat. I like it dr-rippin’ r-reddish.”

He ate with gusto, taking frequent small nips from his bottle. When he’d finished the steak, he wiped his mouth on his sleeve and said:

“I’m just fr-rom Bangassou on the Mbomu R-river-r. Know the place?”

“Yes—at the Equatorial Africa border.”

“I’m on my way back to Elizabethville, and doin’ a bit of dr-rinkin’ as I go.”

“Still seven or eight hundred miles to go,” I said. “A half-quart won’t take you far.”

“Half-quar-rt? Hoot! I’ve dr-runk four-r quar-rts in the last two hundr-red miles, and I’ve yet twenty quar-rts waitin’ for-r me along my way. Half-quar-rt? Na, na!”

Then he told me that several months before, at Elizabethville, he had been hired to guard a twenty-wagon freight outfit en route to a mining development near Bangassou. A long-time friend of his, Louis Weimer, had also been hired, as mine foreman. The first day out, Roger discovered that one of the wagons carried ten cases of bottled whisky. About every fifty miles thereafter, he’d stolen a bottle and hidden it along the way. He said:

“I’m now dr-drinkin’ my way back to civilization.”

“And Louis?” I asked.

He sighed. “Louis is home safe by now I tr-rust. He never-r could save enough money to go home. But I’m the saving kind, and when I’d saved enough, I paid his passage. He’d a ver-ra pr-etty wife back ther-re. He showed me her-r pictur-re often enough.” He sighed again, and added:

“It r-requir-red five year-rs of savin’ my odd shillin’s.

The Jungle can be Fun

Nor-rmally I don't make much money, being a tinker-r, y
see. Mcnd pots, and the like."

Little by little, Louis's story came out. Six years ago, Louis had married a "lovely, r-rosy-checked" Dutch girl at Johannesburg. At that time, he'd been working in the Robinson Deep Mine, and making good money. His wife became pregnant, and he shipped her off to Detroit, promising to be with her by the following Christmas. He'd got as far as Cape Town that year, gone on a bender while waiting for his ship, spent all his money, so returned to Johannesburg and his job. For four more years, he'd done the same thing, growing sadder each year, "For-r," Roger said, "he loved that wee wife desper-rately."

"And you finally bought his ticket," I said. "You're a good sort, Roger."

"Aye. I bought his ticket."

"Well, he's home for Christmas this year, then," I said.

"Aye. Home for-r Chr-ristmas."

"You'll be hearing from him one of these days. Drink up."

Roger drank. "No," he said, "I won't be hear-rin' fr-om him. He got dr-runk up ther-re at Bangassou, for-rgot to boil his dr-rinkin' water-r, and got the fever-r. I shipped Louis home, all r-richt, but he was dead."

I threw more wood on the fire. For a long while, neither of us felt like talking, so we just sat, staring into the flames. At last Roger killed the bottle, got to his feet and said:

"I was within thr-rce or-r four-r miles of another-r bottle when I saw your-r fir-rc. Let us get it and celeb-r-rate one mor-re Chr-ristmas."

It took some sleuthing, but Roger finally located the bottle in a brush clump. He uncorked it by thumping its bottom with the heel of his hand. We drank. We sang all the way back to my fire. We pulled my blanket nearer the heat, spread it out,

African Adventures

sat down and sang some more. We nipped from time to time, and tried harmonizing. It sounded good, so we put our heads close together, shut our eyes and really made the welkin ring.

We sang *It's a Grand Old Flag*, *Scots wha hae wi Wallace Bled*, *On the Banks of the Wabash, Comin' through the Rye*, *Any Old Place in Yankeeland is Good Enough for Me*, *Braw Bricht Nicht*, and Lord knows what else. Then each began singing a different song at the same time. Finally we got mixed up and thought we were celebrating New Year's Eve, so joined hands and sang *Auld Lang Syne*.

Then it was morning. I looked up from where I lay in the grass beneath a thorn tree to see Roger dry-shaving with an old-fashioned straight razor. I was too headachey to talk. He wiped his razor, wrapped it in a piece of flannel, got out a canvas "housewife", mended a tear in his trousers, then strapped on his pack and started away. I sat up and said:

"Hey!"

Roger turned, smiled and said:

"I've left you a dr-rink. Y'll need it, for-r 'tis plain you'r-re no a dr-rinkin' man."

And without a backward look, he walked away, singing.

